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Tales

MANASSEH.

MANASSEH,

A

TALE OF THE JEWS.

"On account of the Palace which is laid waste,
We sit lonely and weep.
On account of the Temple which is destroyed,
We sit lonely and weep.
On account of her walls which are pulled down,
We sit lonely and weep.
On account of our majesty that is gone,
We sit lonely and weep.
On account of our great men that have been cast down,
We sit lonely and weep.
On account of the Priests who have stumbled,
We sit lonely and weep."
Song of the Karaite of Jerusalem.

LONDON:
J. HATCHARD AND SON, 187, PICCADILLY.
1842.

752.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY G. J. PALMER, SAVOY STREET, STRAND

PREFACE.

THE importance of every portion of the Jewish history is so generally acknowledged—the records of a people elected and separated from the rest of mankind for the especial purposes of the Almighty, are of such stirring interest to all who feel how closely connected with the hopes of the Christian are the things which have been seen of Israel, that a tale taken from the holy writings scarcely requires further preface, than to crave indulgence for the pen which has traced it. Still, to those who may object to the mingling of sacred history with the least shade of fiction, I would

state that the subject of the following pages has not been adopted without consideration, nor written without serious reflection.

The history of Manasseh, and the characters brought into action with him, are slightly touched on in the Book of Nehemiah, and further mentioned in the history of the Jews by Josephus. Thus far all is purely historical; and although words, feelings, and actions, are attributed to the personages of the tale, for which history affords no actual warranty, the most scrupulous care has been taken, that in those passages where the course of the Bible history is alone followed, nothing should be related that does not appear in the books from which the story is gathered.

I repeat, that it was not without consideration that, to illustrate the subject of this tale, the pages of the Holy Scriptures have been referred to. Independent of the moral conveyed by the example of Manasseh, it appeared to me useful and desirable, through the means of his interesting

history, to awaken attention to a portion of the Old Testament, which I have generally found is but slightly and imperfectly known, even by those who have not seemed otherwise deficient in knowledge of the Sacred Writings. It is difficult to account for this partial information, and the inattention observed towards the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

According to the will and hidden purposes of the Almighty, the first books of Scripture treat more fully of his dealings with his people; but still, in the short histories of Ezra and Nehemiah, we read of almost as great a deliverance as that of the Israelites from the Egyptians, while the one great feature in Bible history is strictly preserved. I mean the close connexion which it always marks between holiness and happiness; between national righteousness and national prosperity; nay, even between the piety and peace of private individuals.

It seems to me that the inclination to pass with inattention any portion of the

holy Bible should be strongly combated and that we should ever bear in mind the words of St. Paul—"*All* Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." If, then, through the medium of this little book, an important period of the Jewish history is more fully studied—a most interesting portion of the Holy Scriptures more carefully read—the humble efforts of the author will be amply and happily repaid.

Heath Lodge, Sept. 27th, 1841.

MANASSEH.

CHAPTER I.

When the Lord God of Israel brought his chosen people into the land promised to them for a possession—the fair, fruitful land of Canaan—he made conditions with them through his servant Moses. Stern and uncompromising as were the uttered commandments; bounteous and merciful as were the blessings promised to their observance of them; still we learn the sin of flagrant disobedience was to be ascribed to the people of Israel, through the long period of their existence as a nation.

Among the backslidings, to which their

unrighteousness led them, unlawful and forbidden marriages with the people of the strange nations stand conspicuous; and whether in the zenith of their power, or at that period of their humiliation when it was only by the Persians' sufferance they were allowed to dwell on the holy hill of Zion, such unrighteous unions were of frequent occurrence.

Manasseh, the grandson of Eliashib the high priest, dared thus to transgress. His history forms the subject of the following pages. It is a tale of human weakness, of human suffering: but when did man ever oppose the laws of God without directly or indirectly undergoing the penalty attached to the sin!

We learn in the Old Testament,* that the temple of the Lord God was rebuilt, and, in defiance of the plots and opposing artifices of enemies, it was completed in the reign of Darius Hystaspes, the Persian king. It was by this monarch's instrumen-

* Ezra vi. 15.

tality, that a measure so desirable to the fallen Jews was effected. For though commenced by Zerubbabel, who, in the reign of Cyrus, was thereto empowered by a decree of that mighty king, according to the direct prophecy of Isaiah, yet the foes of the children of the captivity had so far prevailed, that they troubled them in building, and frustrated their purposes, until the reign of Darius Hystaspes. Beneath his favouring sway, however, the altar of the Lord was once more raised; the smoke of the sacrifice ascended to heaven, and again the Jew could worship the great Jehovah of his fathers in his chosen temple of Zion.

Years passed on. Xerxes succeeded to Darius, and reigned twenty-one years. And we find in the seventh year of his successor, Artaxerxes Longimanus, called in Scripture, Ahasuerus, that Ezra, who was descended in a straight line from Aaron, and the grandson of Seraiah the high priest, slain at Riblah by Nebuchadnezzar, after

the destruction of the temple, went up to Jerusalem with full powers from the Persian king. He went with his heart prepared to seek the law of the Lord, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments; and he went not up empty-handed. Instructed by a letter from Artaxerxes to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellers freely offered to the God of Israel, "whose habitation is in Jerusalem," the same royal mandate bade him, with all the silver and gold he could find in the province of Babylon, buy the animals required for the meat-offering of the altar of the God of his fathers; and whatsoever more, that might be needful for the house of God, was to be taken from the king's treasure-house.*

Is it not good for us to pause here, and observe the singular and striking circumstance of the God of a fallen people being glorified by a monarch in the very height of his power; reigning, as we are told,

* Ezra vii. 15—20.

" from India even unto Ethiopia,* over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces;" and of a religion different in all respects from that of the captives scattered throughout his dominions? It is true that the religion of the Persians taught the existence of an eternal, holy, and almighty Being; but at the same time it recognized two other deities, all-powerful, though created by him. They were of opposite natures. Ormuzd, the spirit of good, supplying happiness; Arimanes, a wicked and revolted spirit, the author of all the evil upon earth. To this belief, the Persians united the idolatrous worship of fire and the sun; not as separate deities, but as the emblem or image of Ormuzd; thus at once evincing the distinct character of their religion from that of the Jews, which so strictly forbids image-worship. Must we not then admire the Divine omnipotence, which made itself felt and acknowledged so remarkably in the persons of those

* Esther i. 1.

mighty Persians, Cyrus,* Darius, and Artaxerxes, and subsequently in that of Alexander the Great? That the power of the one true God was intentionally manifested to these proud heathens, we cannot for an instant doubt; but see, that by their means the same mighty band which led the Israelites through the wilderness; which loosed their enemies upon them when their iniquity called for chastisement, was still extended to the succour of that people.

Ezra, after blessing the Lord God of his fathers, which had put such a thing in the king's heart, as to beautify the house of the Lord, which is in Jerusalem, felt strengthened by the hand of God; and gathering together the chief of the men of Irael to accompany him, went up to Jerusalem. Trials awaited the holy man. For scarcely were the necessary arrangements entered into,—the treasure consigned to the house of God,—and the king's commission delivered unto the officers and governors hold-

* See note 1 in Appendix.

ing authority in Judea, when the zealous Ezra found that iniquity yet abounded amidst his countrymen;—that sin even now dwelt with the stricken people; and that in defiance of the law, the Israelites who had come up with Zerubbabel, nay, even the priests and the Levites, had not lived separate from the people of the neighbouring countries, but that, by intermarriages, the holy race were mingled with the strangers of those lands.

The discovery of this flagrant disobedience filled the soul of the pious Ezra with astonishment and sorrow; and he felt, as it were, implicated in the sin of those, who he had hoped might have been taught better things, by the wrath of God, which had so fallen upon them. Here was a people, who after having been delivered, for their iniquities, "to the sword, to captivity, and to confusion of face," had still received the assurance that they were not forgotten by ther God. His grace was again shown to them; the kings of Persia had been moved

to mercy for their sakes;—again were they established in Jerusalem,—again was the house of their God set up. Yet still were they polluted with evil deeds—still were they sunk in trespasses and sins. Again, by direct outrage to his law, did they provoke the anger of God, which, if it had utterly consumed them, so that there should have been no remnant escaped, the horror-stricken Ezra felt would not have been more than their iniquities deserved from the righteous God of Israel.

As was the custom of the rulers among the Jews, Ezra, in a manner, identified as his own, the sins of those, over whose welfare he had been sent to watch. Humbling himself, he rent his garments; and plucking the hair of his head and beard, he cast himself down before the house of God. Alas! there have since been holier eyes, which have wept over the sins of the guilty city. Lips, which spake as never man spake, have poured forth sweet lamentation, that Jerusalem, perverse Jerusalem, whose

children God would often have gathered together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, would not be saved from the desolation to come. The stiff-necked people — the sinners of the stony heart, have alike shown themselves unmindful of the things which belonged to their peace, when spoken to them by the mouths of priests and prophets, and of that one blessed "High Priest of good things to come,"—the Son of God himself. All was hidden from their eyes—eyes wilfully, wofully blind! We who live in these "the latter days," have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us, of the judgments of times past. We know all that has befallen the proud daughter of Zion. We know that not one stone has been left upon another. We know, though she did not, "the day of her visitation." But we know also that a day is promised when the degraded and dispersed of Israel shall return to the favour of their God; we know that once more, passing from beneath the cloud

of a frowning providence, they are "to be led forward and planted in the Lord their righteousness, for a name and praise in every land."

Prostrate and self-abased for the evil doings of his countrymen, pouring forth the confession of sin and trespasses, the pious Ezra was surrounded by a large assembly of those, who yet trembled at the word of the Lord God of Israel. Their voices were also raised in sorrow and lamentation, and their hearts quailed within them, for fear of the judgments of the Lord.

At length one amongst them, feeling the futility of confession which was without fruits—of repentance without reform, spoke unto Ezra of the broken law of Moses—of the spirit of disobedience which had let them give their daughters to the sons of the people of the land, which had bid them take to themselves wives from out the proscribed nations. He spoke of the one only measure now to be taken; it had already been coun-

selled by Ezra—to put away all the strange wives, and such as were born of the unlawful marriages. It was, indeed, all that remained to the sinning Israelites; and the zealous Shecaniah, assuring Ezra of their co-operation, concluded by beseeching him to take the matter into his hands.

Ezra arose. The desires of his soul were fulfilled. Israel beheld the extent of its misdeeds; and he saw that there was yet hope concerning this thing. He made the chief priests, the Levites, and all the people, swear that his injunctions should be obeyed; and withdrawing from the sin-convicted multitude to the privacy of retirement, there, in fasting and in prayer, he sought further instructions from his God. We read the results in the tenth chapter of Ezra.*

What a picture of the desolating influence of sin is there presented to us—of that bitterness which iniquity worketh—of the dark hours of retribution! Who can read of the forced meeting, with the hard alter-

* See Appendix, note 2.

native of forfeiture of substance and of country, presented to the contumacious, without feeling for the fallen Jew? Who can read of the great rain, whereby nature, as it were, lent distress and horror to the scene;—who can picture to themselves the internal struggles of affection with religion; the beautiful bride cast from her husband's bosom—the wailing offspring banished and disowned—the stern priest denouncing the judgments of God upon the guilty weakness which would still cling to the beloved ones,—without feeling that the fierce wrath of God was in this matter;—that Israel, under the temporal nature of the first covenant, was even at that moment suffering judgment for sin?

It must be ever with awful interest that we dwell upon those records which tell of the obstinate wickedness of the Jews. But though we may shudder at the recital of the calamities their sins have called down upon them, still must we learn with glowing hearts of that tender mercy which, in its

long-suffering, has again received them to its love—of that heavenly care, which " as an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings,"—has so brought them out of sorrow and tribulation to the blessings of joy and peace. But is it Israel alone that has thus experienced the loving-kindness of God? Is it in the Holy Scriptures alone we learn of sin and judgment, and of God's mercy which repenteth him of the evil? Oh! no. Each passing day brings to our notice in individuals all that the history of God's people recounts. We see the froward and proud of heart, sunk in iniquity and corruption, unmindful of the God who formed them. We see the divine anger kindled against them; we see it heap mischief and spend its arrows upon them; and how frequent—how happily frequent—do we find the blessed effects of such judgments, and see the sinner arise from the sickness that has laid him low—the affliction that has

bruised his heart—the stroke that has bereft him of all his worldly substance, a new creature—a penitent reconciled to his God—one who knows no other will, but that of his Father in heaven! It was not thus, however, with the Jewish nation. They rebelled, and punishment fell upon them. Again did God draw them with bands of love; again were they set up. But still the obdurate of heart transgressed; therefore was "Judah given to the curse—Israel to reproaches."

CHAPTER II.

After the events related in the foregoing chapter, we find little mention of Ezra in the sacred writings. But we are assured that his labours were not less in the cause of righteousness. He applied himself solely to restoring and providing for the continuance of the worship of God in its original purity, and according to the Mosaic ritual. For this purpose he collected, arranged, and revised the Hebrew Scriptures.* Whether from the original books, which some think may have escaped the burning of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar; or whether

* See Appendix, note 3.

from the numerous copies which doubtless existed, and of which some were probably carried by the Jews to Babylon, while others were left in Judea, it is not ascertained. But this much is certain; that with reference to these and his other labours, the Jews regard him almost as a second Moses: considering that as the law was given by Moses, so it was restored by Ezra, after it had been in a measure extinguished in the captivity. By his means were corrected all the errors which through the mistakes of transcribers had crept into previous copies. All the books of the Holy Scriptures were collected and disposed in proper order; and, assisted by that same spirit which first dictated them, he added in several places what appeared necessary for the illustrating, connecting, and completing them. He also changed the old names of several places grown obsolete; and it is from these marks of a later date, or rather of later interpolation, that the authenticity of the books of Moses have been questioned by infidel

writers. But the objections thus raised are weak and frivolous, and scarcely merit any serious attention. For when it is considered, that the few passages in question are of an explanatory nature ;—that they are easily distinguished from the original writings of Moses ;—and that Ezra himself was an inspired writer, raised up by God to revive the Jewish church which Moses had first established, we can see in these objections merely the wanton cavils of the sceptic.

While the holy Ezra was thus labouring in the great work to which he had been called, and devoting his every power to the interests of religion, we read in the book of Nehemiah, that the cry of affliction still rose from the children of Israel, even unto the palace of the Persian king.

Artaxerxes, who had first sent Ezra on the sacred mission, with power and treasure to beautify the house of God, still sat on the throne of Persia. Nehemiah filled the office of cup-bearer to the monarch, a situ-

sion of favour and consideration, and me has brought this officer into immediate contact with the king: an advantage, perhaps, to be prized equally with the great emolument it affords. Still, in the midst of the splendour and luxury with which he was surrounded, the ear of the faithful Jew was open to the tale brought to him by Hanani and other men of Judah: and he learnt with sorrow, that the walls of Zion were yet unbuilt: that enemies encompassed it around, and that reproach and affliction still bent down the spirits of the remnant left of the captivity in the provinces.

The sad tidings were neither lightly heard nor quickly forgotten: but sank deep into the heart of the favoured cup-bearer. The pleasures of a court—the intoxicating nature of a monarch's friendship—the influence which that friendship secured him, had not extinguished the flame of piety and the love of country in the bosom of Nehemiah. In an instant, by the recital of his

brethren's wrongs, the prosperous minion of a powerful king felt himself but as the captive Israelite, mourning the sorrows of his people; and he sat down and wept.

Withdrawing himself from the dazzling and sensual enjoyments of the Persian palace, which now stood stripped of all their allurements, Nehemiah, for some days, gave his whole soul to the new and holy grief which oppressed him. He fasted and prayed before the God of heaven; thus looking to the only power which could strengthen and console. With the eloquent out-pourings of a devout and sorrowing heart, he besought the "great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him," to hear his incessant prayer for his people Israel; to listen to the confession of that people's sins, uttered by the lips of one, bowed down, weeping and fasting, with heaviness and sorrow bemoaning the affliction of his brethren. With fervour he prayed that the Lord God would remember the blessed

promises of peace and protection, given through his servant Moses, to the penitent and true of heart; and, with a righteous pride in the mercies already shown, glorying that it was for a chosen and redeemed people that he prayed, he besought for grace in the undertakings which his soul contemplated.

The high and important station held by Nehemiah in the court of Artaxerxes, and which by its engrossing and seductive character might have proved the hindrance to his engaging in an enterprise of care and difficulty, was in reality, through the providence of God, the blessed means of its success. Brought by his office into immediate contact with the person of the king; beloved and of consideration in the court, the Jewish cup-bearer used the influence which the Persian monarch's favour gave him, for the furtherance of his views. Like Moses in bygone times, he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than rest inactive in his prosperous exile; and

as the great lawgiver despised the treasures and delights of a magnificent court, when put in competition with the dictates of conscience, so Nehemiah hesitated not in his holy purpose. We learn that it was in the month Chisleu, answering to the end of November and part of December, that Nehemiah first heard the tidings which had so greatly moved him; and we find that by the month Nisan, which corresponds with the month of March in our calendar, his resolution was taken, his plans matured, and ready to be brought into action.

It was a time of deep and holy interest to the zealous Jew; and well can we imagine, that with the knowledge of his people's affliction, which doubtless his further inquiries had brought to his mind; with his powerless yet anxious wishes to succour them, in addition to his fear of failure, that his soul was oppressed with care and sorrow.

The royal table was spread. The king sat at meat with Esther the queen. She,

the lowly Jewish maiden, who had been raised so specially to the Persian throne.

Nehemiah, who also shared the privilege of access to the royal presence at the time of feasting and relaxation, presented wine to the king. With all the trouble then working in his mind, depictured on his features with a force of expression he found it impossible to conceal, it was scarcely to be expected that his dolorous aspect should escape the notice of Artaxerxes. It soon awakened his attention, and he at once asked of his favoured servant,

"Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart."*

There was a pause. Nehemiah experienced some dismay, lest his woeful demeanor had caused anger against him in the bosom of the sovereign, in whose presence all was joy and gladness; at a time too when he so ardently desired to find him propitious to his hopes. The importance of

* Nehemiah ii. 2.

the crisis was also felt, and sealed the lips of the cup-bearer.

At length he spoke; and prefacing his words with the customary courtesy addressed to Eastern princes, "Let the king live for ever," he continued; "why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?"

Here was indeed cause for sorrow; and as Nehemiah proclaimed so impressively the desolation of the holy city; the ruinous state of the ancient sepulchres, things of such pious veneration in the breast of every Jew;—the defenceless state of Jerusalem—the gates still showing the devastation caused by the Babylonian fire-brands;—may we not believe that Esther, she who had shown such zeal and love for her devoted countrymen, caught the words of lamentation, and showed by looks, if no by low and mournful murmurs, her sympathy in the sad announcement? At any

rate, some powerful motive actuated Artaxerxes; who, anxious to lessen the grief of his sorrowing companions, asked, with the kindness of the man, and the sense of unbounded power of the Persian monarch, "For what dost thou make request?"

The moment was come. Directing first a holy aspiration to the God of heaven, consisting, we may imagine, of prayer and thanksgiving, Nehemiah besought the king to suffer him to proceed to Judah, and to raise the prostrate walls of the ruined city.

The king's answer re-assured the misgivings of the anxious Nehemiah. Far from resenting the important demand of surrounding with muniments the city of a captive nation; and so reinstating it in the security of those days, when as yet it had not fallen before the conqueror; the reply of Artaxerxes was merely a question as to the probable duration of the absence petitioned for—an affectionate inquiry into the period of his return. Indeed, all seemed as

favourable as the most sanguine expectations could have looked for.

Furnished with letters to the different governors for safe conduct through their several districts; and, moreover, empowered to demand supplies of timber, for the rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, from those under whose jurisdiction were the forests of the king, Nehemiah set forth on his holy mission, guarded by a band of cavalry. And in looking on the favourable circumstances attending his undertaking, truly might he feel that the good hand of his God was upon him.

Nehemiah reached Jerusalem in safety. But, notwithstanding his many advantages, the new ruler of the Jews was sensible that it was essential he should act with wariness and circumspection. Previously apprized of the existence of enemies,—conscious how greatly this contemplated measure militated against the system pursued by the governors of Samaria and others towards the oppressed and vexed Israelites, Nehemiah ventured

not at once, nor in open day, to ascertain the extent of the ruin of the defenceless city; but for a short time remained inactive, and disclosed to none "what his God had put in his heart to do at Jerusalem."

After three days, however, the vigilant Jew arose in the dead of the night, and at that still hour, with a chosen few, proceeded in silence and in secrecy to the awful inspection.

What a moment for the pious Israelite! There stood the daughter of Zion, dimly seen beneath the veil of night which hung over her. And how mournful in the obscurity which shrouded, but yet concealed not her broken walls, her gates destroyed with fire, and which cast as it were a funereal mantle over all!

This was not the time, however, to pour forth lamentations over the waste places of Jerusalem. Danger was around, foes lurked on every side, and, the sorrowful survey completed, the little band returned to take counsel together

All seemed favourable to the intrepid delegate, and ripe for action. Calling around him the priests, the nobles, and the rulers, to whom as yet he had declared nothing of his purposes, he at once declared his mission, and the assistance to be looked for from the Persian king. His words were well calculated to move the hearts of the assembled Jews; for he spoke to them of the affliction and persecutions they endured from their enemies,—of the desolation of the once fair city,—her prostrate walls, her flame-charred gates, and the chosen people of the Lord a reproach.

The heart-stirring representation failed not to awaken the dormant energies of the suffering Jews, and, encouraged by the assurance of the inspired Nehemiah, that the hand of God was for good upon this work, they simultaneously acceded to his proposition of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

"Let us rise up and build," burst from the lips, that till that moment had muttered

only ineffectual curses on their enemies; and their hands were strengthened for the work.

It was not long ere the pious and patriotic resolve reached the watchful ears of the surrounding foes. Sanballat, the Horonite, and governor of Samaria, Tobiah, a freed slave, and risen to authority, Geshem, the crafty Arabian, the Jews' most malignant enemies, affected to despise the rumour. Conscious how successfully a conspiring faction had hindered an attempt made, in the early part of the reign of Artaxerxes, to set up the walls of Jerusalem, by strong representations made to the king of the seditious and rebellious spirit of the Jews, and of the power the strengthened city would give them of resisting the tribute exacted of them by the Persian monarch;* they hoped that a like commandment would be given, that the "city should not be builded."

A scornful message was therefore sent to

* See Ezra iv. 11, and succeeding verses.

Nehemiah, who, now openly assuming the government of Jerusalem, was recognized as Tirshatha, the title borne by the Jewish governors under the Persians. The specious question was asked, "What is this thing that ye do? Will ye rebel against the king?"

The implication of sedition, under which the faction sought to veil their own enmity and opposition to the measures about to be commenced, was thus replied to by the high-souled Nehemiah:

"The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build; *but ye have no portion, no right, nor memorial in Jerusalem.*"

A volume could not have conveyed more contempt and defiance of the miserable plotters, than did these concluding words of the fearless Tirshatha; and we can well fancy the bitterness added by this brief answer to the deadly enmity already felt towards the people of Judah.

CHAPTER III.

For the better understanding of the intense hatred entertained by Sanballat and his creatures against the elect of God, we have only to cast a glance to the anterior history of Samaria. In the allotment made by Joshua, on his first entrance into the land of Canaan, when commanded to divide the whole land among the Israelites by lot, both that part which was, and that which was not, subdued, it may be remembered, that he divided the land on the western side of Jordan, part of which comprehends Samaria, between nine tribes and a half, the eastern side being given to the tribes of

Reuben and Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. The whole remained beneath the government of the judges, and the separate kings who succeeded the Theocracy, until after the reign of Solomon; when, on the death of the wise king, and owing to the folly of his son Rehoboam, ten of the tribes revolted, and became, under Jeroboam, a separate kingdom; the tribes of Judah and Benjamin who remained faithful to Rehoboam, the rightful king, being called the kingdom of Judah, the ten under Jeroboam, the kingdom of Israel; the capital of which was at first Shechem, then Tirzah, and afterwards Samaria. Through their idolatry and wickedness the heavy displeasure of God fell on both kingdoms; and at length, in the reign of Hoshea king of Israel, Salmaneser the king of Assyria, whom we may consider the instrument of the divine vengeance, besieged Samaria, and carried the conquered people captive into Media, thus putting an end to the kingdom of Israel, two hundred and fifty

years after its first establishment. However, " a remnant still remained in the land." But mixing with the different people sent to inhabit Samaria by the Assyrian Esarhaddon, who succeeded his grandfather Salmaneser, the worship of the true God became corrupted by the admixture of the polygony of the new colonists. An unholy partnership with idolaters was thus formed. Not so much a discredit to the heathen, who, from the nature of their religion, had no reluctance to admit the God of Israel amidst their idols; but, on the part of the Israelites, how fearfully it merited the judgments which subsequently befel them! It is true that, in the course of time, the Samaritans' worship of the one true God became more pure and single; but their religion has always continued distinct from the Jews in some articles of belief, as well as in ceremonial practice.

A similarity, but still a difference in religion, it has been observed, is more productive of rancour and dispute, than where re-

ligious opinions are wholly distinct. This circumstance tends to explain, in some measure, the irreconcileable enmity between the Samaritans and the Jews; an enmity which took its strongest growth from incidents succeeding the return from the captivity.

The first bitter cause of wrath was on the occasion of the commencement of the rebuilding the temple by Zerubbabel. Anxious to identify themselves, as it were, with a people, to whom, it appeared, the Persian conqueror was disposed to show favour, the Samaritans made applications to be suffered to join in the holy labours; alleging, at the same time, as reasons for this unity, the conformity of their worship and modes of sacrifice to that of Judah, since the days of Esarhaddon.* Their overtures were rejected with scorn by the uncompromising Zerubbabel, and the rest of the chief of the rulers. "Ye have nothing to do with us, to build an house to our God," were the contemptuous terms in which the rejection

* See Appendix, note 4.

was couched; and in consequence whereof, the most inveterate and effective opposition to the undertaking was commenced; with what success is shown in the fourth chapter of Ezra. "Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building." Hence originated the implacable enmity which has ever since existed between the Jews and the Samaritans; an enmity rendered still more deadly by the answer of Nehemiah to Sanballat; which, replying as it did to the former assumption of the Samaritans, of an identity of their religion with that of the Jews, seemed at once to decide the distinction between them. "Ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem."*

The defiance uttered, the Tirshatha thought but of the work he contemplated, and lost no time in apportioning the different parts of the building. To Eliashib, the high priest, and to his brethren, he assigned the re-construction of the sheep-

* See Appendix, note 5.

gate, which, according to Home, was so called from the victims intended for sacrifice being conducted through it to the temple; and thus, as it were, coming peculiarly under the care of the priesthood. The other portions of the mighty reparations were similarly distributed; and, with scarcely an exception, the rulers and elders, and those under them, put their necks earnestly to the work.

The spies employed by Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, who was likewise leader of the different tribes which made common cause against the oppressed and vexed Israelites, were not slack in communicating to him the important measures pursued by their hated foe.

On learning the actual progress of a work so calculated to impede the measures observed towards the persecuted inhabitants of Jerusalem—a work which promised so completely to enhance the consequence of the fallen Jew; the breast of Sanballat was filled with a deep and fearful wrath. He,

at the moment, called a meeting of the chiefs of the various and predatory bands, who were encamped in the plains about Jerusalem; and who had, by turns, assumed towards the people of Judea the guise of friends and open foes; at one moment leading them by dangerous familiarity into forgetfulness of the law; at another, trampling on the unprotected and spirit-sunken Jew. Now, however, under the title of the army of Samaria, they evinced open and undisguised enmity to the children of the captivity.

With a bosom raging with fierce indignation, the imperious Sanballat spoke to the assembled chiefs, with bitter and angry scorn, of the new and powerful measures adopted by the, till then, inert people; but the contemptuous terms in which he expressed himself, ill concealed his real annoyance, or the consequence he attached to the conduct of the Tirshatha.

"What do these feeble Jews?" he said, while a smile of affected scorn and super-

cilious defiance played over his lips;—a smile, contradicted, however, by the fiery and earnest gleamings of his eagle eye, which better spoke the feelings called up by the proceedings of the governor of Jerusalem. "What do these feeble Jews? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice, and so assert and resume their hated privileges? Will they make an end in a day of the utter lowliness and slavery into which the Babylonian conqueror has plunged them? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish which are burned? Will they thus attempt impossibilities?"

No one replied to the fierce questioning of Sanballat. All knew how true was the report of the spies; and that the walls of Jerusalem were fast rising beneath the builder's hand. But there was that in the proud Horonite which forbade them urging that there was more to excite fear, in the steps taken by the Jews, than the smile of derision; and the curses which breathed

from the bosom of Arabian, Ammonite, and Ashdodite, as the lawless chiefs grasped the lances on which they leaned, seemed to speak of some more active opposition to the labours of the foe. Tobiah alone, he who had arisen from servitude to power and authority, and who for his own secret purposes wished to preserve the union existing between himself and the governor of Samaria, spoke with crafty consonance to the sarcastic tone assumed by Sanballat.

"Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." The scoffing which would thus describe the fragile nature of the fortifications constructed by Nehemiah, had in it, we may suppose, some deeper motive than merely soothing the anger which the tacit defiance had raised in the bosom of Sanballat. It was a point of policy with Tobiah, and probably judged advisable by his leader, thus to affect to despise their work; and, by apparent contempt, throw the labouring Israelites off their guard. If such

were their purposes, they, however, fell harmless. Nehemiah suffered not his people to relax in their undertaking, which prospered under the united force of vigorous activity and prayer to God.

Although the scorn of the conspired foe was made known to the Tirshatha, it produced no other effect than renewed zeal; but the heart of the holy man was moved with pious indignation, that the chosen people of the Lord God of Hosts should thus be subjected to the contumely and scorn of the evil-doers around. It was thus he spake in the bitterness of his displeasure: "Hear, O, our God, for we are despised; and turn their reproach upon their own head, and *give them for a prey in the land of captivity;* and cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders."

There must strike us in the punishment thus denounced against his enemies, and which burst in a stream of passionate elo-

quence from the lips of the zealous Nehemiah, something of a prophetic nature; when we learn, in the succeeding history of the Samaritans, that within a century of vengeance being thus called down upon them, thousands of them were carried captive into Egypt by Ptolemy Soter, the son of Lagus, the king of Egypt. The judgments on Samaria, moreover, stayed not here. Become by conquest subject to the kings of Syria, it also suffered oppression and persecution by the very arms raised against the Syrian yoke, and at length saw its cherished temple, on Mount Gerizim, fall beneath the rule of the Maccabæan princes.

This is not a solitary instance of the enemies of religion sinking beneath the wrath of God. Other iniquity besides theirs has been "uncovered;" other sins have remained "unblotted out." Still, alas! the evil-doers will arise—still the holy One of Israel is provoked to anger by the hindrance to his worship and righteousness.

CHAPTER IV.

THE defenceless and ruined city was at length half encompassed by its walls. But when the malignant foes of the Jews heard that the devastation of the Babylonian spoiler began to disappear, and that the walls of Jerusalem ascended around it, a dark and fierce resolve entered into their hearts; and in spite of the protection lent to the work by the countenance and consent of the Persian king; in spite of the risks they encountered of fatally offending the proud Artaxerxes, to whom they also themselves were subject, they conspired together, and resolved, by the force of arms, at once

to hinder the fast increasing fortifications. For the better effecting the evil purposes of their wrath, it was arranged by Sanballat and those who shared with him in his bitter hatred to the Jews and their prospering labours, that their attack should be sudden and decisive. "They shall not know," said they, "neither see, till we come in the midst of them, and slay them and cause the work to cease."

It was a desperate and sanguinary resolution, and we may judge, from the extent and nature of the opposition shown, how great was the wrath produced in the neighbouring nations, thus to see a stronghold rising for their defiance and annoyance in the midst of them. However, God watched over the labours of his people. Still was he jealous for Jerusalem, and displeased with the heathen who helped forward the affliction.

Though at the first coming of Zerubbabel to Jerusalem, thousands of the children of the captivity had returned with him to the

city of God, and large companies were still crowding within its holy precincts; many of the people of Judah yet continued to dwell in the plain country round about Jerusalem and the villages thereof, besides those who still lingered in their own possessions and inheritance in the different cities of Judah.

From these Jews dwelling in the open country, near unto the different encampments of the enemy, Nehemiah learnt of the murderous intentions of Sanballat and his allies. For a moment the intelligence brought consternation into the city; and the people, so prone, since the days of Moses, to be cast down at the first reverse, cried, "The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall."

The heaven-directed Tirshatha listened not to these desponding murmurs; but setting a watch by day aud night, so that every movement of the enemy should be

made known to him, made earnest prayer to God.

Again were the adverse intentions of the conspirators repeated by the country people, with the information that at every outlet of the city a forcible entrance was to be made. The tidings called for decisive action. Accordingly, Nehemiah put the whole population under arms, and adjuring them, by the great name of the Lord, to fight for their kindred and possessions, sought to give them courage against the expected attack. The enemy learning, however, that their plots had been unveiled, and that the God of the persecuted Jews had brought their counsels to naught, desisted from their desperate resolves.

Again was the work of fortifying renewed. The vigilant Tirshatha, however, suffered no relaxation in the defensive position taken. He established a system of a military character; and the people working with weapons of defence, as well as with instruments of labour in their hands, the wall was completed.

Though the gates were not yet set up, the defence of Jerusalem became comparatively of easy compass to the inhabitants; Sanballat, therefore, sought no more by force to pursue his malignant designs on the detested city, but adopted a new line of action, and directed his rancorous purposes against the pious and noble-minded governor, rather than towards the people under his charge. He felt that, were the Tirshatha once in his power, dispersion and anarchy would again bring down the newly-invested city to a level with those of the rival districts which surrounded it; and the assumption of divine protection prove but an empty boast. Deep and desperate were the devices of the Jew-hating Sanballat, who, in everything, was ably seconded by the wary Tobiah, the sharer of his vindictive jealousy towards the redeemed city and of the same vengeful hate which the scorn of Nehemiah had excited; but who, in the far-spreading ambition of his soul, which had already raised him from the lowly position of a freed slave

to the government of a province, saw still further aggrandizement for himself in the deposition and destruction of the Tirshatha. Looking only to his individual good, Tobiah was prepared either to seek it by open hostility to the Jews, or else by underhand measures to ensure to himself a share of whatever advantages their destruction might afford. Thus he sought, by a secret show of friendship and overtures of alliance, to prepare for the failure of the conspiracy against the person of the Tirshatha; and with every disposition to aid in all the hostile views of the less designing Sanballat, the Ammonite possessed further advantages which promised success to their machinations.

Notwithstanding the solemn prohibitions of the law, the afflictions and judgments which the broken covenant had brought down upon them, and the late humiliation; notwithstanding the awful denouncements and decrees of Ezra, the holy scribe who still laboured for the people of the Lord, and daily rescued

some portion of God's written word from the mists with which the lapse of ages, and the fearful period of the Babylonian conquest, had obscured it;—notwithstanding all this, still did the intermarriages of the Jews, with those of the strange nations, cause despite to the Holy One of Israel. Well might the word of prophecy, which ever and anon sounded in the ear of the erring people, cry unto them, "Even from the days of your fathers, ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them." In vain did the mysterious Malachi proclaim from his solitude, that "Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord;" that "abomination was committed in Jerusalem." Alas! the voice of the prophet sounded upon deaf ears; and the daughters even of those chief rulers, then engaged in the strengthening of the holy city, were given to men of the nations which lay under a curse—the nations which God had commanded them to root out!

Among them we find that Shecaniah,

the son of Arah, and of a family apparently of importance, which came up to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel, had given his daughter in marriage to Tobiah, the Ammonite, one of a people shut by God's decree from out the congregation for ever. And still more; even Meshullam, the son of Berechiah, one of those to whom Nehemiah had confided the building of the city wall, had suffered Johanan, the son of Tobiah, to espouse his fair and only child.

It is not here the place to inquire into the motives which could thus actuate to unrighteousness two noble Jewish families; though some clue may be afforded in the wealth of the aspiring Tobiah, and in the straitened circumstances of those who came up from the captivity, and the poverty implied in the fifth chapter of Nehemiah. It is sad to dwell on such flagrant proofs of disobedience. It suffices us to know that so it was; and that by means of these alliences, and the still incomplete fortifications, Tobiah was in constant communication with

the nobles of Judah, and thus enabled to concert with Sanballat their treacherous dealing against the hated Tirshatha.

But how impotent are the devices of the wicked, when directed against the protected of God! We learn that, aware of their evil intentions, Nehemiah resisted the importunities of Sanballat, and Geshem the Arabian, to meet him in the plain of Ono; and yet after they had four times received the same answer to their proposition of a meeting, still Sanballat persevered. The fifth time, he sent his servant with an open letter in his hand; by which circumstance, so different to the epistolary ceremonials observed by the Orientals, who never send an open letter, unless to an inferior, we may judge that the enemies of the Tirshatha, even while luring him to a confidential meeting, could not persuade themselves to show him the respect which his exalted position and character demanded.

The epistle informed Nehemiah, that it was reported that the end he proposed, in

fortifying Jerusalem, was, that himself and the Jews might rebel against the authority of Artaxerxes; and that, in furtherance of his designs, he had appointed prophets to preach of him in Jerusalem, and to declare him a king; that this intelligence would, doubtless, reach the ears of the Persian monarch; and that it would be well for the Tirshatha to take counsel with them, how it were best to meet the awakened wrath of the king, which could scarcely fall on one portion of his Syrian possessions, without affecting the whole district. Nehemiah suspected the malice of his enemies in the well-fabricated tale; particularly in the wilful perversion of the inspired words of Malachi, who then poured forth his prophecies; and he answered them accordingly. Still was his heart troubled; for the report was rife among all, that they had threatened that the hands of the Jews should be staid, and the building left undone.

It was a time of difficulty. The Jewish

people, so prone to despond, had already lifted their voices in complaint; and the paralysing influence of disaffection stole among them. There was a cry of poverty —of famine; and murmurs against the exactions of the usurers went up throughout Jerusalem. Nehemiah felt that the exigencies of the moment called for his most serious consideration; and he poured forth devout prayers for the strengthening of his hands. To those, who, profiting by the distresses of their brethren, had rendered the burthen of the times still heavier, the Governor showed, by his own forbearance and neglect of his rightful dues, the righteous and patriotic course to be pursued. He also rebuked them for their hard-hearted usury, and required that it should cease. The example of one, who, far from exacting his rights as Governor, supported at his own private cost an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, besides those who joined them from the nations around, and all his servants who were gathered thither unto

the work, was a powerful stimulant to the awakened consciences of the oppressive usurers; and when engaged by the eloquent Tirshatha to make restitution, so they did, and made oath unto the same. It was a blessed triumph of charity and good-will over the rapacity engendered by evil times; and the Tirshatha, as he prayed to his God to think upon him for good, according to all he had done for that people, must have felt the one pride, which surely may be justified,—that of having contributed, by righteous measures, to the happiness of his fellow men.

Not yet, however, were the troubles of the holy man to cease. Still were the relentless minds of his enemies bent to do him wrong. By a suborned agent, the feigned particulars of a conspiracy were laid before him; by which it appeared that his only mean of safety was to seek an asylum in the house of God; as he was led to believe that the closed doors of the temple might at least be respected.

The pious heart of Nehemiah shrank from thus transforming the temple of the Lord into a citadel; or to incur the risk of desecrating its holy precincts, by the deed of blood and violence which might be enacted there; and he declined to seek the protection the sacred walls would yield him. By the manner in which his refusal was received, he perceived all the snare which had been laid for him; and that this was a device of Tobiah and Sanballat, who hoped, that in the alarm the report was calculated to awaken, he would have forgotten the veneration held by the Jews for their holy temple; and so, using it as an earthly sanctuary, give cause for evil report, and render himself liable to reproach. The innate rectitude of his heart—his high sense of the religion of his fathers saved him; but he felt a pious wrath against those who thus had planned the pitfall, and saw reasons for redoubling his watchfulness.

The wall was completed on the twenty-

fifth day of the month Elul;* and those who had opposed were humbled and disheartened. They perceived that this work was wrought of God—the God of Judah—the mighty one of Israel.

Still were the hands of the evil-doers raised to do harm,—still were the thoughts of the enemies of Zion turned to work destruction. By means of the alliances which the designing Tobiah had formed with the nobles of Judah, speedy intelligence was conveyed to him of all the Tirshatha's actions. This was in itself favourable to the furtherance of his projects; and, moreover, while his allies within the city sought to raise him in the estimation of Nehemiah, the Ammonite at the same time ceased not to convey threats and projects of violence by their means; in order that from fear, as well as policy, the governor of Jerusalem might be induced to engage him as a partisan. But it is not thus that the chosen of

* Answering to the month of August.

God have ever swerved from the high standing they have taken. To have fellowship with the workers of iniquity, however cogent might seem the reasons for the compromise, had never been the conduct of the delegates to whom the interests of the people of Israel have been committed; neither was it in this instance.

The wall completed—the gates set up, it now became the immediate care of the Tirshatha to stay all communication between the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the enemy without its walls. Accordingly he gave the watch over Jerusalem to his brother Hanani, him, by whose means the Persian cup-bearer was roused into the man of valour, and to Hananiah, one whose fidelity was assured by the knowledge that "he feared God above many." The charge was committed to them, with the instructions that the gates of the city should not be opened until the sun was high in the heavens; and that they, themselves, should superintend the closing them at even. The careful Go-

vernor also appointed that watches of the inhabitants should be held in the city; and that each should keep guard over his own dwelling: for as yet Zion had not arisen from the desolating stroke of the Babylonian; and within the extended space of its fortifications, few were the habitations to fill it, few the people therein. But the active vigilance of the Tirshatha provided against these disadvantages; and the enemies of Jerusalem thus excluded, the peace of the holy city remained unbroken.

CHAPTER V.

LEAVING now the course of the sacred writings, which were so far necessary for the development of this history, we will turn to the relation of other events, immediately connected with the subject.

Manasseh, the son of Joiada, and grandson of Eliashib the high priest—thus born to the honours of the priesthood,—was not yet admitted into the ministry by reason of his youth; and had only just entered into that novitiate, before which, we learn from Maimonides, no Levite was permitted to exercise the sacerdotal functions. During this probation, the neophyte carefully learnt

all that related to the sacred office, not being admitted to the full service of the temple, until he had attained the age of thirty.

Born of a holy and distinguished race, the person of Manasseh seemed to speak of superiority; and the eye, as it rested on the fine proportions of his figure, the manly beauty of his face; the ear, as it listed to the deep, full tones, which repeated the wisdom of the patriarchs, or chanted forth the melodious praises of the God of Israel, were fain to confess, that nature, by making him thus perfect, had, as it were, consecrated him to the service of the great Jehovah.

The gates of Jerusalem were closed—the guard was set, and each inhabitant was, by turns, watching over the dwelling which sheltered him, when Manasseh was disturbed one night in his holy studies, by the entrance of some one into his chamber with quick and stealthy steps. Manasseh turned to discern the countenance of the intru-

der, and beheld that it was Meshullam. Not as he had last seen the Jewish ruler, gay with rejoicing at the marriage feast of his young daughter, united to the rich Ammonite, the son of Tobiah;—not as he had once known him, in high authority under the Tirshatha, actively presiding over the labours of the builders, beholding, with all the pride of an Israelite, the walls of Zion rising around him; but with grief-disfigured features, with ash-strewn head, and all the ceremonials of affliction common to the Jews.

It was some moments ere, replying to the hasty questioning of Manasseh, the sorrowing man unfolded the reason of his coming; and interrupted as his story was by all the wild gesticulation and expression of grief usual to the Eastern mourner, Manasseh was at a loss to divine, why it was to him the current of his sorrows was poured forth. It appeared, at length, that the wife of his bosom, the still adored mother of the maiden he had given to Johanan

the Ammonite, was fast sinking into the grasp of death. Her sickness had been of some duration; but for a time she had rallied, and hope again cheered the heart of Meshullam. Yet it was but one faint gleam, soon to be obscured; and once more the Jewish matron lay on the bed of suffering. It was now that a second woe fell on Meshullam. To every tender care, to every suggestion or solace, but one cry was sent forth; the mother languished for a sight of her child. Once more to clasp her Zeruah to her bosom seemed as if it would alone restore health, or would at least suffer her to sink calmly into the grave. That sight was denied to her.

Shut out, by the vigilance of the Governor, from direct communication with the city, Tobiah at once refused the intercession made for the return of his daughter-in-law for some short time to the bosom of her mother. The knowledge of the maternal longing, and the sickness of one so dear, were even kept from the Ammonite's bride,

so strict was the tyranny, with which Tobiah resented his own exclusion from Jerusalem. During a period when the minds of the conspiring chiefs were turned but to one object; and desirous that no domestic ties should interfere with their designs on the hated city; the daughter of Meshullam had been removed, with the other females of the household of Tobiah, to the habitation of Sanballat at Sichem, there to wait until the present crisis should be passed. And finding, from the rigorous expulsion of all his creatures from Jerusalem, that his near connexion with the two Jewish families was of no weight, the Ammonite was glad that the consigning the females of his family to a place of safety left him, encamped on the plains of Judah, at liberty to pursue the career of craft and molestation at present occupying him.

In this strait, the heart-broken Meshullam had sought the grandson of the high priest. Knowing his kind and generous temperament — the ardent spirit which

showed itself in all its actions, and, above all, guessing that, from his near connexion with one so high in the sacerdotal office as Eliashib, his powers of assisting him were not trifling, he poured forth his whole soul in supplicating him to facilitate the restoring of Zeruah, for some brief time, to the arms of her dying mother.

Meshullam did not sue in vain. Touched to his inmost feeling by the anguish of the husband, who in very desperation seemed to place his only hopes for the restoration of his wife, on her again seeing her child; Manasseh devised with him the means of executing his heart's desire, and of bringing once more beneath her father's roof the bride of the Ammonite. But one method presented itself: a measure, in some degree facilitated by the removal of Zeruah to Sichem, which was known to Meshullam, and also the absence of Tobiah and his son; but still it was a step fraught with danger and difficulty. However, Manasseh shrank not. He saw the gleam of hope play over

the troubled brow, he felt the convulsive grasp of the grief-struck Meshullam, as he clasped his hands, and called down a blessing from Jehovah on his undertaking; he saw his parched and trembling lips move in prayer; and the noble and generous spirit of the young Levite was finally resolved. Manasseh knew not of the poignant remorse, the bitter throes of conscience, which increased the woe and distraction of Meshullam, as the belief came over him, that even now, in the affliction that bent him to the earth, he was suffering the judgments of God for the disobedience which had given his child, the beautiful Zeruah, to the stranger—which, tempted by his ill-gotten wealth, had given a Jewish maiden to the Ammonite; one shut out for ever from the great congregation.

The contemplation of this deadly, hopeless endurance of the deserved wrath of God, might have been a timely beacon to the heart of Manasseh, and saved from wreck the happiness which, even now, neared

the hidden sands formed for its destruction. But, alas! how vain are examples—how vain are warnings, when the spirit of man, daring in the least to outrage the known laws of his Maker, makes, as it were, covenant with sin, and leagues with his own inborn corruption.

At the earliest dawn, Manasseh proceeded on his mission, which, considering the nature of the sickness of the wife of Meshullam, admitted not of delay. Once passed the gates of the city, he divested himself, as far as was consonant with the Jewish regulations, of the vestments of the priesthood; and throwing around him a robe of the coarsest texture, such as was usually worn by slaves, he set forth on his weary pilgrimage. It had been decided that it were best he should proceed on foot, as any other mode would have attracted notice from those encamped on the plains, and caused perhaps his detention and consequent delay. He now hoped to pass unmolested, as one of the lower orders, seeking his home in

some distant village. And so it proved; for by noon he had already left behind him the different stations occupied by Sanballat and his allies, without one hindrance or encounter; and entered at length the rocky defiles, through which lay the road to Sichem.

Long and painful was his march. It was in the last days of the month Elul, and the hot season was at its height; and as Manasseh for a time rested beneath the beautiful groves of the plains of Jericho, and knew the arid and burning path which lay between him and Sichem, he almost questioned whether the strength of one, whose foregone years had been passed in the sedentary employments of those destined to the priesthood, rather than in the nerving sports of youth, would bear him with the desired speed to the journey's end. For the return of Zeruah he had not so much anxiety. Once in Sichem, and able to procure an interview with her, he doubted not but that by some of the expedients sug-

gested by Meshullam, he should be able to conduct her to Jerusalem.

The shades of night at length fell on the travel-tired Manasseh; and as its refreshing influence brought a return of vigour to his frame, he hastened onwards with renewed speed. But Sichem was still far before; and the sun had risen full on Mount Gerizim, ere he entered the beautiful valley in which lay the town. At length he passed beneath its walls; and by directions gathered on his way, he soon found himself close to the dwelling of Sanballat the Horonite. Here he paused; for it was necessary some precaution and consideration should be employed; and he proceeded to examine with attention the extensive range of buildings which lay before him. There was an air of quiet and desertion prevailing around, which much reassured him. Near the principal entrance, all that he descried of the inhabitants was a few slaves reclining in the shade of a sort of portico; while, in the interior court, he perceived, sitting within reach of

the splash of a fountain, a venerable person, who Manasseh guessed as the superintendent of the household. His first impulse was to address himself to the old man; but he hesitated, knowing how little satisfactory was the account which he could render of his object, and therefore how unlikely he was to obtain an interview with the bride of Johanan.

While thus undecided, the eyes of Manasseh rested on a small enclosure which lay to the right of the house, and was surrounded by a low stone wall. The thought struck the anxious Jew, that it was possible that some of the women's apartments opened on to this field; and, retiring some distance from the gate of entrance, he was strengthened in the belief, from perceiving that there were goats of an uncommon kind, with ornamented collars, grazing on the scanty herbage of the enclosure. Accordingly, when out of sight of the gate of entrance, he sprang over the dwarf fence, and passed rapidly on, till he came beneath the walls

of the house Here he was disappointed. No window looked on the field; but, on examining narrowly around, he perceived a low door in a wall, which apparently separated the field from a garden, as several high trees arose beyond it. He tried the door with eagerness, and finding it unfastened, entered into a thick grove of cedars. He paused not beneath the welcome shade; but with every pulse beating high, at the near prospect of succeeding in his undertakings, he passed on quickly through an open entrance, which he found led him into a long, dark passage. Carefully and cautiously unclosing a door, which impeded his farther progress, he at length entered a large and apparently remote chamber, while the branches of the cedars he had already seen, cast a pleasing gloom and freshness throughout the apartment.

At the further end of the room reclined the youthful figure of a female. On her knees rested a scroll, which, as Manasseh

stole with noiseless steps towards her, he perceived was an ornamented page of the holy writings; and by the intentness with which the young creature bent to its perusal, he guessed that in her he beheld his countrywoman, the lovely daughter of Meshullam.

She was attired in all the sumptuous apparel chosen by the wives of the Rulers, and which was indeed adopted by all the females of the East, whose means were equal to such magnificence. A rich, jewelled head-band in a measure confined a redundance of dark and glossy hair; a curiously-worked collar of gold encircled her slender and beautifully-formed throat, while the tints of her rich damask robe, which was worn over a garment elaborately worked with gold and precious stones, rendered still more striking the loveliness of her form and complexion.

The heart of the wayworn Manasseh sank with a pang of sorrow, as he gazed on the unconscious female. The guilt—the

dishonour of the intermarriages of the people of God with the strange nations, seemed at the moment more enormous to his perceptions; and he felt a rising wrath against the father, who, for the sake of Ammonitish wealth, could consign so fair a Jewish maiden to the keeping of the son of Tobiah. The low sigh which burst from his labouring bosom awakened the attention of the young girl. She lifted her head, and the glow which had rested on her bright countenance—a glow which seemed caused by the inspired words she so greedily devoured, at once faded into paleness, and an expression of terror troubled her fair brow, as her eyes fell upon Manasseh. It was but for a moment, for a second look showed her that in the fainting, fatigue-stricken form of the slave who bent before her, there was but little cause for fear.

Manasseh was indeed sinking under the combined effects of overstrained powers and agitation of spirit, and his parched tongue vainly essayed to give utterance to

his mission. Casting himself on the ground, he leant his head for support against the stone framework of the low window; and for a moment all consciousness had left him.

Quickly recovering, however, Manasseh found the young female bending over him, bathing his temples with water from a large stone vessel which stood in the embrasure of the window. Sweet and compassionate were the looks fixed on him; and as he met the kind and earnest gaze, his heart ached with sorrow at the remembrance of the grief he had come to inflict. Rising from his recumbent posture, he was about to instruct her in the sad state of the wife of Meshullam, but the movement displacing the large coarse mantle which had enveloped him, it fell, and disclosed the well-known vestments of a priest of the temple.

The sight of the sacerdotal insignia seemed to inspire terror and consternation in the young female; and, spreading forth her hands in supplication, she uttered the words, "My father!"

"It is not of him I would speak," Manasseh said quickly; "it is of thy mother, who even now sinks in death."

"Alas! alas! I have no mother," she rejoined, still regarding him anxiously.

Manasseh, believing that exaggerated intelligence of her mother's dangerous illness had already reached her, hastened to assure her that the end was not come yet; and disclosed why he had come—the hopes of her return—and the anguish of expectation in which he had left Meshullam.

Deep concern spread over the features of the lovely girl who stood before him; but her excitement of manner was gone; and she said quietly, "Thou takest me for my friend Zeruah—the rose of Judah. It is to Nicazo, the daughter of Sanballat, thou now speakest."

A long explanation followed; but Manasseh found with rejoicing that he had disclosed the secret of his coming to no unfriendly ear. Undertaking to convey with caution, to the daughter of Meshullam, the

news he had brought, and the wish for her return to Jerusalem, Nicazo, after seeking with her own hands some wine and bread, placed it before him; and beseeching him to take some repose, with the assurance that in that chamber he need fear no interruption, she left him; but promised that in a few hours she should be able to bring Zeruah to his presence.

Long did Manasseh remain gazing after the fair creature who had left him. Deep and perturbed were his thoughts. A tumultuous conflict of feeling heaved in his bosom, and a long sad sigh bespoke the grief it was to find, that one so lovely, one giving such bright evidences of early excellence, should own for parent, Sanballat—the arch-enemy of Jerusalem!

Turning at length to the refreshments that Nicazo had placed before him, Manasseh forgot not that his fatigued system needed restoration; and aware of the weary way he had still to retrace, sought by sleep to renew his failing strength. Soothed by

the quiet and coolness of the room, the softest slumbers came over him; and he awoke not, until the lateral rays of a declining sun, entering the apartment where he lay, disturbed him.

CHAPTER VI.

To the surprise of Manasseh, on awaking from the long and refreshing sleep which had brought such renewed vigour to his frame, he found he was not alone.

Three female forms seemed waiting anxiously the cessation of his slumbers; but who, with the tenderness of women, had forborne to disturb them.

The only one unveiled of the three, Manasseh at once recognized as Maachah, the proud daughter of Shecaniah, and wife to to Tobiah. She immediately proceeded to inform him that the unhappy Zeruah hesitated not to accompany him to Jerusalem;

and even now deplored each minute that must intervene ere she flew to the bosom of her mother. The sobs which burst from the overcharged heart of Zeruah spoke eloquently of her sufferings.

Manasseh learnt still further, that from the tender interest taken by the daughter of Sanballat in the desires of her friend, all things necessary for their journey were provided, and herself prepared to accompany her. Manasseh started, the thought of the long and weary way they had to traverse, and the recollection of the delicate girl he had seen, was a painful idea, and he sought to dissuade her from the project. Throwing back the linen wrapper from her head, Nicazo spoke with earnestness on the impossibility of the heart-stricken Zeruah going without some female attendant, and of the indiscretion of acquainting any of her slaves with their purpose, all of whom were in the pay of the Ammonite, who would doubtless learn of their flight. It appeared that the plan devised was, that Maachah should

speak to the household of the sudden sickness of Zeruah, and of her wish that none but herself or Nicazo should come near her room. By these means they believed their absence would be unobserved, and they thus hoped to return without chance of detection.

Manasseh could say no more, and Zeruah at the moment grasping his arm, and imploring him to hasten forth, for that even then the moments were passing which would bring home the numerous slaves from the labours of the field, and thus perhaps betray them, he obeyed, and followed, with the wretched daughter of Meshullam, the hasty steps of Nicazo, who, again enveloping herself in the folds of her veil, led the way quickly through the cedar grove, and across an immense court to the stables. There she told him he would find two stout asses, ready for their use, with which she begged he would follow Zeruah and herself. Explaining that they would not tarry there to mount, as the servants, who by some

pretext of merrymaking, which she had devised, in order to cause their absence from their charge, might, in consequence of the delay which had taken place, be returned, and find for whose service she had commanded the beasts to be prepared.

Manasseh did as she requested, and the light steps of Nicazo and her companion had already borne them beyond the town, ere he once more overtook them.

Again was the same weary route traversed, the same halting places were observed, the same fountains tasted by his thirsty lips; and though the first hours of their march was made during the cooler hours of night, the same ardent sun rose, with fevering beam, full on the exposed travellers. At length, in the twilight of a long day, the gates of Jerusalem were opened on the way-spent fugitives. But how different in its effects on the mind of Manasseh was his homeward journey! No sense of fatigue had once oppressed him; anxiety and care had, it is true, filled his bosom; but it was

care, which had met its reward in the comforts it had assured to the gentle beings he had so assiduously guarded. Fear had at times come over him, as the encounter of strangers threatened detection to the companions of his pilgrimage, and pity for the sorrows of the afflicted Zeruah had weighed on his bosom; but yet, as he turned from the dwelling of Meshullam, where he had consigned in safety the precious objects of his care, there was a sense of past enjoyment at his heart, an interest, an unknown happiness, which even lasted through the visions of that night's slumbers.

Imprudent Manasseh! Was there not in these novel sensations, in this wild feeling of delight, sufficient to call for a close investigation of your secret soul? Would you not then have found the first touch of the poison which embittered all your cup of life? Would you not then have torn from your heart the dart which guilt ordained was to rankle there for ever? Would you not then have rooted out that evil plant of

disobedience to the known mandates of your God, of which the young growth might then so easily have been eradicated? Alas! yes, self-examination would have shown all this, would have spared all future trials, all future sin. But the young Aaronite turned from the painful inspection—turned and fell.

The day after the return of his daughter, Meshullam informed Manasseh that after the transports of joy caused by once more holding to her bosom her beloved Zeruah, the suffering mother had sunk into happy tranquillity, interrupted alone when losing for an instant sight of her recovered treasure. The next day Manasseh was told that she was dead.

The third night after Zeruah's return to Jerusalem, Manasseh was once more visited by the grief-stricken Meshullam. There was one more trial prepared for the judged of God. It was to see depart from him the child of his bosom, his last tie to earth. Reason told him that so it must be, that she

must seek the husband to whom he had consigned her, and he came to the young Priest to beg again his protection for his child. But how bitter were his repinings, how deep the anguish which now crushed his spirit, to find that his disobedience to the word of God had so soon found retribution!

At the time that the son of Tobiah had sought the beautiful Zeruah for his bride, the policy observed by the Tirshatha had not so completely excluded the stranger from Zion, and Meshullam had not anticipated that the Ammonite would so far make common cause with Sanballat, as to render the measure expedient. But though he had erred in foreknowledge of its consequences, the sin was not less upon his soul. The words spoken by the righteous Ezra in his prayer for the people of Israel,* came to his thoughts. Meshullam felt all their weight; he could not stand before God, because of his transgressions. Thus

* See Appendix, note 6.

is it ever with the sinner; the day cometh when the impunity of guilt passeth away, and its penalty and enormity are alike felt. Oh! that man would better know the things which concern his everlasting peace!

At the close of the next day, Manasseh quitted the Holy City with his two weeping companions. No words passed between them; the daughter of Meshullam betrayed her mental agony by sighs and smothered groans; and the tender-hearted Nicazo sympathized too truly in her grief to have spirit for discourse. Thus the hours of the night followed silently and drearily on. But the dark and dangerous valleys which lie between Jerusalem and Jericho were passed in safety, and the noonday sun found the travellers in comparitive security, and within a few hours' distance from Sichem.

The daughter of Sanballat rode somewhat in advance, and, to catch the air from the mountains, had thrown back the veil which had till now enveloped her face. Manasseh

gazed on her in silence. She was pale, and her dark hair streamed in dishevelled luxuriance around her face. But even thus how beautiful she seemed in his eyes! and a weight of deep regret pressed on his heart, as he thought how soon it would be when he should see her no more. He passed onward in the impulse of that moment, and laying his hand on the bridle of the beast she rode, to somewhat stay its movements, said, "Does Nicazo rejoice that the end of all this weary course is near?"

She looked at him for an instant, but replied not; and he continued, "Will Nicazo ever think in after days of one, who for this brief space has felt so much her friend?"

"To think of the Priest of Judah will henceforth form thy servant's only joy," she softly replied.

A gush of impassioned feeling swelled the heart of Manasseh to bursting, and bending near her, he asked in hurried and earnest accents,

"Maiden, couldest thou love me?"

One sweet glance of tender and yet respectful devotion met his eager look; and she replied,

"The daughter of Sanballat must be given by her father's hand."

Those words, that look, were all sufficient. They told, in the simple diction of the time, that the fair Horonite would gladly be sought in marriage by the descendant of Aaron. But there was a chord which jarred harshly, as her answer met his ear, "The daughter of Sanballat!" How much of evil that spoke to the rash and impetuous youth! However, the current of his thoughts were called most suddenly into another course, by the appearance of a band of armed men, descending the mountain by the route the travellers had to pass.

They halted in consternation, there were no means of avoidance, for at the time they were traversing a narrow defile, bordered by steep rocks. Enveloping themselves in their veils, the females could only utter

prayers to heaven for protection and safety, and following Manasseh, they advanced to the encounter.

When within some hundred yards, Manasseh was surprised to see two men leave the armed band, which then halted, and proceed alone to meet them. But his alarm was great when he perceived that it was Sanballat and Tobiah who approached them.

Dreading the reproaches which he conceived would be showered on the heads of the youthful creatures under his care, he awaited the meeting with a sense of painful anxiety, and his relief was great when he heard how gentle was the reproof uttered by Sanballat to the tender Nicazo. The joy of meeting his child in safety seemed to have overcome every angry feeling.

It appeared that the Samaritan governor had learnt the whole of their proceedings from Maachah the wife of Tobiah, who had found it impossible, on their sudden return from the encampments on the plains around

Jerusalem, to conceal from them the absence of Nicazo and the bride of Johanan. It was on this account that Sanballat and his party had again come forth, to claim the fugitive women at the gates of Jerusalem.

The conference was but short; and taking the bridle of the beast Nicazo rode, Sanballat drew from his girdle some pieces of money. Casting them down at the feet of Manasseh with stern disdain, he said, "Slave of Meshullam, thou hast done me evil; but he who sent thee has the greater blame. Return to Zion; but let it not be said that Sanballat hath ever left unpaid one who has served his child faithfully."

Manasseh turned to depart, leaving the silver ungathered from the dust; but Zeruah, who till now had not spoken, raised her grief-choked voice, exclaiming, "It is not the slave of my father thou wouldest leave to his fatigue and loneliness, but his approved friend—the grandson of our high Priest, the holy Eliashib!"

Sanballat and the Ammonite cast surprised looks towards Manasseh, and whispered hastily together. To have seen the keen and anxious glances of the wily Tobiah as he spoke, it might be thought his words betokened harm to Manasseh. Be that as it may, their effect was to cause Sanballat to quickly follow the offended Jew, and by expressions of kind and courteous meaning seek to conciliate, while offering that hospitality it was so little consonant with the times to withhold. In the state of exhaustion and fatigue in which he found himself, rest seemed almost essential to the way-worn Manasseh; few and faint were the refusals offered to Sanballat's energetic and hospitable invitations. They were finally accepted; and the son of Joiada proceeded with the little band to the vale of Sichem.

CHAPTER VII.

On the completion of the walls and fortifications of Jerusalem, Nehemiah turned to the investigation of the civil and religious state of the neglected city.

The scarcity of its inhabitants first struck his attention; and finding the registry of the people, made by Ezra, of those who came up with Zerubbabel from the captivity, he made use of it, in order to complete the restoration of their possessions to the respective tribes. By its means, he was also enabled to put from the priesthood those who were not reckoned by genealogy; and decreed that none but the

Levites and descendants of Aaron might officiate in the service of the temple.

Nehemiah also gave largely unto the treasury; and the rulers and people, worked upon by his noble example, gave their share.

Their righteousness and newly-awakened zeal for the things of God, staid not here; but with one voice they called upon Ezra —the inspired of the Lord—to bring to them the written word, given to them by the great Jehovah through Moses.

The cry went not up unheard: and on the first day of the seventh month, which was known as the feast of trumpets, Ezra, rejoicing at these holy aspirations, brought forth the book of the law; and to the congregation of men and women assembled before the water-gate, he read therein from the morning until the mid-day.

Ezra was not alone; but beside him on the elevation of wood, which had been raised for the purpose, to lift him up to the sight of all the people, stood some of the

chief rulers, and those who had laboured so piously for the reconstruction of the walls of Zion. Meshullam,—the mourning, repentant Meshullam—was among them. He, the wifeless, the childless, and who had already paid into the treasury the wealth gained by his sinful alliance with the Ammonite, now stood to hear the word which convinceth the evil-doer of sin.*

On hearing the blessed law of God, Meshullam's was not the only heart which felt reproached and convicted of having transgressed its ordinances, and many there wept with loud voices, as the holy words dropped upon their ears. But the Tirshatha, and Ezra, and the Levites, stayed the ebullition of their penitence, exclaiming—"This day is holy unto the Lord your God—mourn not, nor weep."

And they told them it was a day for rejoicing and feasting—a day for the sweet charities of life, a day on which the rich should rejoice, "and send portions unto

* See Appendix, note 7.

them for whom nothing is prepared." And that blessed axiom of true religion was taught them, "*The joy of the Lord is your strength;*"*—that holy truth which tells us, that in the blissful knowledge of one supreme, just, and merciful Being, is consolation for all the evils of life;—that happy truth which covers the spiritual bosom as with a shield;—to which, as St. Paul has since expressed it, "there is all joy and peace in believing."

With such inspiriting tidings did the men of God still the people, and bade them keep the day as one of holy rejoicing. And they went away to partake of the blessings given by a bountiful Creator; while to do good and distribute they forgot not; and how great was the happiness which the perfect understanding of the words of God brought to their hearts!

On the second day, again were the fathers of the people, the priests and the Levites, assembled by Ezra, to be instructed

* Nehemiah ix. 10.

in the ordinances and the commandments of the law. They learnt that still further rejoicing was at hand, for that the Lord had ordered by Moses that the Feast of Tabernacles should be held on the fifteenth of the seventh month.* So all the congregation of the redeemed Israelites—that favoured people whom God had called from captivity to renew the glories of the olden time, and to learn from past judgments to renounce the sins which had called down those judgments upon them—prepared the joyous festival.

Great was the gladness of the true hearts, who perceived, in the divine ordinance, a care for their innocent enjoyment of the bounteous provision made for them by God, at the same time that the remembrance of his past benefits were called to their breasts.

During the eight days, through which the feast lasted, Ezra still read to them from the holy writings. May we not ga-

* See Appendix, note 8.

ther from this public instruction in the laws of God, from which it followed that the law was read every sabbath to the Jews, and in buildings erected for and appropriated to the purpose, that our meeting every seventh day, to be taught the holy things of God, originated? Surely yes. And as since this establishment of synagogues, of which we have no mention before the Babylonian conquest, the crime of idolatry ceased to be chargeable against the Jewish nation, may we not consider that the sabbatical worship, instituted by the first Christians in consonance with these salutary regulations of the Jews, has been equally instrumental in saving us from sins against the Almighty? Then let us, while we devoutly thank God for our exemption from the unknown sins from which this weekly assembling of ourselves has saved us—while we earnestly pray for the blessings promised to the faithful worshipper of God, let us, by the most strenuous means of example and persuasion, lead every creature to omit not

that one great help to salvation, the attending divine service every sabbath in the temples dedicated to God.

The course of religious observances thus brought into action by Ezra and the pious Tirshatha, ended not with the Feast of Tabernacles. Purified and enlightened by the discipline of the preceding days, with their hearts melted with the knowledge of the tender care shown for them, in all the laws set before them by the Shepherd of Israel; the people prepared to observe with pious zeal the solemn fast ordered by the rulers; and with all outward marks of woe and penitence then in use among the Jews, they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.

Then stood up, on the elevation erected for the holy purpose, those Levites especally appointed to the office of thanksgiving.

And what a sweet, heart-stirring stream of eloquence was poured forth! At first came the beautiful though brief recapitu-

tion of all God's dealings with his people, when, borne by the everlasting arms, they passed through peril and difficulty, into the land promised unto them,—and they sang of those mysterious times, when heard by mercy, and led by miracle—when in direct communion with the Eternal God, his precepts and statutes were first made known to them. A solemn strain then succeeded. It spoke of the fearful times when Israel became unmindful of the Rock which begat them; when, corrupt with idolatry, they provoked him to anger with their vanities, and in very perverseness sought a return to the bondage of the Egyptian. But again was the theme resumed of God's mercies; and how thrilling was the recital of that great kindness, which, slow to anger, still forsook them not! Then rose a full burst of choral voices, chanting forth, in rapid measure, of God's fulfilled promises to his people—of the nations subdued by their hands—of their plenteousness of enjoyment, the perfect fruition of

hope; and the alternate disobedience and repentunce—the punishment and the pardon of the wayward generation, were told by the inspired choir. At length the Levites' voices sank into a plaintive cadence. God's justice, even in his most terrible judgments, was acknowledged; and at last, touching upon things familiar to them all, the strain which had begun, with the inspiriting declarations of God's glory, died away in reciting the fallen fortunes of his people—their bondage beneath the Persian yoke—their utter helplessness and distress.

Then was seen the wisdom which had planned this appeal to the righteous feelings of the people; and all were prepared to seal the covenant, by which they engaged to do all the commandments of the Lord.

Among the princes, Levites, and priests, who put their seals to the covenant, of which one of the principal clauses was the abjuration of forbidden marriages, (and none sealed, but those who had separated themselves from the people of the land,) we

must be struck by perceiving the name of Meshullam. He thus virtually renounced his daughter for the sake of religion; though his alliance with the family of Tobiah showed how lightly he had once thought of the sin of infringing the positive commandments of the God of Israel. But a better time had arisen for the people of Jerusalem. The temple rebuilt—its services newly arranged—its offerings and ordinances appointed;—with the pious Ezra, the zealous Tirshatha, the inspired Malachi, watching over their newly-awakened righteousness, we may look to the period just touched upon, in spite of the dominion of the Persians, as one of the brightest in the chronicles of the Jews.

CHAPTER VIII.

And the young Manasseh, the noble-minded, the one dedicated by birth to the service of his God, where was he during this season of holy rejoicing and instruction for the people of Zion? Alas! still lingering beneath the roof of the governor of Samaria—still within the influence of the insidious words and courtesies of the crafty Tobiah—still near the fascinations of the young and beautiful Nicazo.

Without seeking to palliate that guiltiness of conduct, which thus kept in friendly intercourse with the enemies of Jerusalem, one, whose vocation and opportunities must

have taught him far better things, thus much may be said in extenuation; that the Jews born in the captivity and in the succeeding times, when, though recalled to the city of God, the words and ordinances of his law were as yet little known to them and slightly enforced, were scarcely aware of the extent of their evil doings.

This blindness to righteousness—this torpor in spiritual things, may be considered as forming part of the judgment denounced against them. And in these days, when we see the sinner left to his devices, may we not conceive it as part of the retribution drawn down upon himself? It is a fearful idea. For although God has said, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye;" still of the wicked man he hath also said—"In his trespass that he trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."

Manasseh, on the morrow of the day on which he had accompanied the governor of

Samaria to Sichem, was preparing to retrace his way to Jerusalem, when his failing steps, his parched lips, the hectic burning of his cheek, and the feverish glare in his eye, showed to Sanballat his unfitness for the journey.

With gentle, and in this instance, friendly violence, the Horonite insisted on his remaining within his dwelling. The next, and for many succeeding days, Manasseh lay on a bed of sickness. When again recovering, there was a weakness over his whole system, which was the plea for further tarrying with Sanballat.

Thus time passed on, and in the kind and courteous treatment of his host, Manasseh forgot that it was received from the enemy of Jerusalem. A dawning friendship arose from the grateful feelings which warmed his young and ardent heart, and with it admiration at the various powers of the Samaritan's mind, so that Manasseh soon learnt to look upon him in the light in which he viewed, or wished to be viewed himself, that of the

harshly used ally of Judah, rather than its born foe.

Every power of argument, every species of evidence, was constantly urged in the conversation of Sanballat with others, towards establishing the one ruling notion of his mind, the identity of the Samaritans with the Israelites. His assertions were grounded on the idea, that out of the ten tribes taken into captivity by Esarhaddon, a portion had escaped, and though since mingled with the people brought into the land, and by the absence of genealogies unable to trace it, he conceived their Israelitish origin to be strongly credible.*

This was the dearly-cherished belief of Sanballat, this the secret momentum of his every action; and taking hold of a fierce ambitious mind, this was the powerful link which held him in alliance with those who conspired against the appointed rulers of Jerusalem.

To bring again the degraded Samaritans

* See Appendix, note 9.

to a level with the proud Judeans, to root out the monstrous idolatry which was mixed by them with the worship of the one true God, to take a part in the rule and divine polity of Jerusalem, had been the hope of years, the end of his existence. There was nothing criminal in this, or in the intensity with which the end was desired; but Sanballat erred in the means chosen. The precept, do no evil that good may come, was unknown to him; and joining the faction, which the stern refusal of Zerubbabel to the offered co-operation of the Samaritans had first called up, the mistaken Horonite made a league with the enemies of Zion. Thus was cemented the hatred betwixt the two people, thus was injured the cause he had at heart, We must blame the course of action pursued by Sanballat, though we may not perhaps err in attributing merit to the feeling which influenced him. But while rendering justice to the elevated considerations which may have actuated his conduct, we must distinguish between them, and the

more personal and unworthy motives, which called Tobiah and Geshem the Arabian into warfare with the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Blind to the faults of his own proceedings, conceiving he had only the history of his own wrongs to relate, when touching on the subject of his dealings with the Jews, the words of Sanballat assumed all the force of truth; and Manasseh, while listening to his laudable desire of ameliorating the civil and religious condition of the Samaritans, and to his conviction of their common origin with the people who so utterly despised them, learnt to look upon his host with respect as well as admiration.

Tobiah saw the favourable impression made on the son of Jehoida by the representations of the Horonite, and for his own private views sought eagerly to heighten them still further. There was yet another cause to lead Manasseh to look with consideration and leniency on Sanballat; that was his paternity and watchful tenderness

for the fair and excellent Nicazo. It was an all-powerful reason, and when the young Judean at length sought Jerusalem, he entered it with every feeling devoted to the beautiful child of the Horonite.

Returning once more to the studies and employments of his vocation, Manasseh was surprised to find the inappetency with which he applied to all that had hitherto offered occupation and enjoyment.

He sought to find interest in the affairs of the holy city; and, when listening to the recital of the religious festivals which had taken place, and of the increase of piety these acts had called forth among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, he rejoiced that so it was, and perhaps felt something like remorse that a voluntary absence had detained him from the salutary influence of the devotional exercises instituted by Ezra. But he attempted not to fathom the hidden feeling which bade him shrink from renewing the covenant with Jehovah, as his countrymen had done; and with self-

deception affected to believe his evasion of the sacred act arose rather from a desire of considering more fully its important conditions, than from the consciousness of inability to fulfil them.

At this time Nehemiah commenced measures for increasing the number of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, of which the already scanty population had been decreased by the exclusion of those of the strange nations. Though there were some of the sons of Judah who voluntarily left their possessions in other places to become denizens of the holy city, and for which the people blessed them, it was found necessary still further to swell the numbers; and for that purpose it was decreed that lots should be cast to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem.

For the furtherance of these measures, it became requisite to send missions to the different cities which were to resign a portion of their population to the exigence of Jerusalem, which, with its walls set up, its

temple completed, had still a more desolate aspect in the solitude and silence of its streets, than when it lay a ruin.

Manasseh was among those who were commissioned to proceed to a distance from Jerusalem on this business, and he received instructions to go to Jarmuth. His mission performed, his return brought him near the walls of Sichem; and the recollection of the kindness and happiness he had received at the dwelling of Sanballat was too fresh in his memory to allow the feeble efforts made by his sense of right, to restrain him from once more exposing himself to the many fascinations he had there encountered.

He went; his reception was at once flattering to the young heart, which rejoices in tokens of distinction and approval from its elders, and delightful to every feeling of his ardent and affectionate nature; and his bosom glowed beneath the exciting influence of the joy which his return to the home of Sanballat appeared to yield its inhabitants.

Instigated by the crafty policy of Tobiah, the honour shown by the Samaritan governor to Manasseh was not without design, and although he looked with favour and delight on the early excellence of the son of Joiada, there was a deeper purpose in the diligence with which his friendship was sought. As the grandson of the high priest, the son of his successor, Manasseh, though not in the direct line to succeed to the pontificate, by reason of his elder brother Jonathan, was of importance in the eyes of those who, though failing in the mischief framed against Jerusalem, still looked to the rising glories of the holy city with sinister and designing views.

Well did the devices of the confederacy succeed, which so warily plotted the entanglement of the young Judean.

In a few months the solemn betrothal of Manasseh with the daughter of Sanballat took place; and although the further completion of the marriage was deferred, in

consequence of the extreme youth of the beautiful Nicazo; considering the sacred nature of the ceremony of betrothment among the Jews, Manasseh had in very deed and truth allied himself by the nearest ties to the enemies of Zion!

And was this all? Was it merely a connexion with her political opponents, with which his conscience was charged? Alas! no. Deeper, darker was the transgression of the son of Joiada. He had sinned before God; in that he was numbered among those who had taken strange wives to increase the trespass of Israel. Calling down the judgment of heaven by his disobedience, he had cast the law of the great, the terrible Jehovah behind him, had changed the ordinances, and broken the everlasting covenant.

And Nicazo, the gentle, the dove-eyed Nicazo, she whose loveliness was set as a seal upon the heart of Manasseh, she for whom his love was strong as death; how far had she aided in the snare spread for the

priest of the temple, what had been the sorceries thrown out, thus to blind him to the things of his peace, what the great abundance of her enchantments? The ardent love of a simple and confiding girl, the timid, lowly devotion of a maiden of Samaria to the proud descendant of Aaron. These, these alone were the secrets of her power.

Poor Nicazo! Thou wert the victim to the pitfall set for another's feet. It was thy woman's heart which broke for the sorrows of another. Yet how happy wast thou in the spouse thy father gave thee, him thy "petition and all thy desire!" How true the affection thou didst bear him, even to the last! Poor Nicazo!

CHAPTER IX.

THE ceremony of betrothal among the Jews was estimated to be as holy and important a rite as that of the marriage which was to succeed, and therefore in itself, the moment that beheld Manasseh affianced to the Samaritan maiden, was the actual period of his transgression. Still it can be readily conceived that amidst the momentous affairs which occupied the mind of the Tirshatha, the fall of one, who, though of the priesthood, had not, by reason of his youth, yet entered into the full service of the temple, passed unnoticed.

But let not a deficiency in vigilance, or indifference to the conduct of his compatriots, be ascribed to Nehemiah, who, overlooking private and individual transgression, laboured with such unceasing zeal in the mighty work to which he had been called. Leaving it to the consciences of the delinquents to reconcile to themselves the breaking the known commandments of their God, the Tirshatha sought, by every means suggested by his divinely-inspired mind, to elevate the Jewish people to higher notions of holiness, while labouring in the cause of the fallen daughter of Zion. Stupendous and unceasing were his exertions; and on perusing the book called by his name, that faithful chronicle of a time so important to the Jewish nations, and consequently to all who see how nearly connected with the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth is the history of God's people, we must be struck as we reverentially observe the working of the divine will through human means.

And how truly is the hand of the Lord to be traced in all the conduct of Nehemiah! Whether we look to the first moment of his pious grief at the representations of the afflicted state of the Jews, and the ruinous state of their city—" the place of his father's sepulchres,"—or view him, through the assistance of Esther, herself a shining example of the providence watching over the Israelites, obtaining permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem:—whether we follow him proceeding with power and authority to Judea, leaving, without one thought of regret, the luxury and affluence of the Persian court;—dwell with him on the desolate state of Jerusalem, as it appeared to his melancholy contemplation in the dead hour of night;—watch him using miraculous exertion to repair its dismantled walls, exciting the dormant energies of those patriotic men who assisted in the undertaking;—behold him defeating the conspiracies of the Ammonites and the arch-enemies of Zion, and after the com-

pletion of the walls and fortifications, applying himself to the furtherance of other public objects;—find him restoring their possessions to the respective tribes, encouraging the return of the Jews to the deserted city, gathering together the people that they might be reckoned by genealogy, that none but the Levites and descendants of Aaron should aspire to the service of the temple and the priesthood;—whether we look at all these acts singly or together, surely we must give our testimony to his self-congratulatory assertion, that the hand of God was upon him for good.*

But when gaining important and obvious instruction from a book which so powerfully illustrates the good effects of a trust in God, by the zealous confidence which enabled the Tirshatha and his people to recover the city, and raise up its walls from a state which had excited the derision of its enemies;—when taught by the success that

* Nehemiah ii. 8—18.

accompanied a reliance on that inspired word, which had predicted by the prophet Daniel,* that the walls should be rebuilt "even in troublous times," — had foreshown by Zechariah,† that its streets should be re-peopled,—let us not forget to look at the farther conduct of Nehemiah. We find that, in conjunction with the precursor of his mission to Jerusalem, "Ezra the priest, the scribe,"—his utmost endeavours were to turn the hearts of all men to their God. For this purpose, the law, with attendant and imposing circumstances, was read to them.

The Feast of Tabernacles and other religious appointments were observed with a solemn and pathetic commemoration of God's merciful dealings to his people; and a sacred and strict renewal of the covenant of obedience and respect to God's law entered into. Well might the good and great Tirshatha cry in pious supplication, "Think upon me, my God, for good, according to

* Daniel ix. 25. † Zechariah viii. 45.

all that I have done for this people;"—well might he implore the great Jehovah to remember him concerning the good deeds that he had done for the house of his God; well might he reiterate the fervent prayer, as in the conclusion of the important book brought under our consideration, "Remember me, O my God, for good." This was not uttered in arrogance of heart; but rather shows the aim and end of all his actions. As he laboured for the glory of God, so he looked for no other reward than his grace and blessing. It was pre-eminently bestowed on him. And while perusing the minute record of his works, we must, in the holy chronicle transmitted to us, recognize, in the character of Nehemiah, one of the "cloud of witnesses," to testify the might, majesty, and dominion of God.

The labours of the holy man were, however, for a season, fast drawing to a close; the period approaching, when his return would be looked for by Artaxerxes. The

intervening time was appropriated to settling the appointments and offices of the temple, and the portions to be assigned to the Levites and the children of Aaron. The walls of the city were also solemnly consecrated; and the completed muniment, as was the custom in ancient days, was dedicated to God and his glory, with thanksgiving and songs of praise, and a long series of sacred and imposing ceremonials. It was a day of exquisite rejoicing. Great sacrifices were offered to the Lord, who had so mercifully recalled his dispersed people. The women and the children were all comprised in the joyfulness of the occasion, and the glad shouts of exultation of the happy Israelites, re-echoing through the redeemed city, were heard even afar off.

Nehemiah at length quitted the scenes of his good and glorious deeds; and though his heart must still have bade him linger, where there was yet a wide field for his watchfulness and zeal in the service of Je-

hovah, he remembered his promise to the Persian monarch, and, true to the wishes of his master and friend, returned to Shushan.

CHAPTER X.

During a period of such soul-moving interest to every Jew, it is difficult to believe that any could have looked with indifference on the affairs of Jerusalem.

The fair city rose, as it were, by magic, from the ruin and devastation of the spoiler; — the forgotten law was again proclaimed to the people; while the wisest measures of domestic policy brought peace and satisfaction into the again crowded streets of Zion. By degrees the minds of men had become better disposed to fealty to their heavenly King; and the weekly reading of God's word from the newly-

erected synagogues, which set forth that the laws, some had dared to despise, were the direct enactments of the Almighty —that their very existence as a nation was by the constant agency of miracle—in ennobling them in their own eyes, strengthened much their newly-awakened righteousness.

At such a time, and in such circumstances, can it be believed that there breathed one, who, living apart from all these things, existed but for the soft pleasures of the heart—the winning hopes of conjugal and parental affection? Alas! there was one. One born to distinction in the divinely sanctioned polity of the Jews; —one gifted by nature with mental intelligence and personal beauty to adorn the rank he took. That one was Manasseh the son of Joiada.

The marriage rite had given to him the daughter of Sanballat. She was now his very own;—his deeply-loved—his tenderly cherished Nicazo. And how deserving of

all that out-pouring of affection was the sweet maiden of Samaria!

With all the soft adornments of the sex:—graceful in the dance, skilled in music, and gifted with the talent which enabled her to raise her rich voice in strains of the sweetest psalmody; with an excess of mortal beauty, rarely met and always loved, she united firm principle, unswerving piety, and an insight into those sacred founts of thought and virtue, the Holy Scriptures, unknown to the females of other nations at that early period, and rare amidst the women of the Jews. Brought up and cherished by the haughty Sanballat, with a tenderness which seemed to belie the sternness of his character, and yet instructed in all the words of wisdom, which from time to time had fallen from the lips of those lights of Israel—"the goodly fellowship of the prophets,"—Nicazo owned, with the singular combination of the confiding, loving helplessness of the child, an extensive and enlightened intelligence, which assi-

milated her nature to that we attribute to the angels of light. There was nothing masculine, nothing worldly in her attainments. All that she owned of humanity was the joyous appreciation of the blessings of earth, the warm feelings which turned in love to all around; after this, all was of heaven. The Almighty, his creations, his mercies, his promises, alone occupied her.

Reared with care and in retirement, and in strict accordance with the one-prevailing idea of Sanballat, that amidst the mingled race of heathen and apostates brought into the fated land of Samaria, there still might be found a remnant of Israel,—Nicazo had never looked upon herself as one of the strange nations, accursed before the Lord. The ambition of Sanballat, which led him into base intrigues and conspiracy; and the implacable enmity his baffled measures had raised up in his bosom, all faded into calmness and moderation within the charmed circle of his own home. The one secret spring of all his actions, the desire of iden-

tifying himself with the Jewish nation, only then appeared. Amidst dependants and subordinates that identity was recognized; and Nicazo, though taught to believe her father harshly treated by the governors of Jerusalem, had never heard it whispered that he was despised as the Horonite, and loathed and feared as the ally of Ammonites and Arabians.

That he, whom in after years we find raising the rival temple on Mount Gerizim, and arrogating to his country the right of that worship and sacrifice which the divine word had said should be offered on Mount Moriah alone, was in himself favourable to religious observances, we may readily conceive; and though, in the fearful spirit which this world's ambition generates, he had, in mad rebellion and disappointed malice, raised the standard of revolt against the elect of God, and resigned himself to the host of passions, which the admission of pride and hate calls up; still, true to the nobler duties of paternity, Nicazo's

gentle bosom was kept clear of all this earthly dross.

Perhaps it was a mistaken tenderness, which kept from her the truth of her origin. Be this as it may; instructed in the books of the law, of which it was the Samaritan boast that they alone possessed the original copies; taught by the prophets to look for the one glorious hope of Israel; brought up in all the virtuous freedom, which distinguished the Jewess from the women of other Eastern nations, who were immured as the toy or slave of man; can it be wondered that the Samaritan girl felt in all things, save in the accident of birth, as a daughter of Judah?

With this blindness to reality, Nicazo, though alive to the grateful reflection, and rejoicing in happy pride at feeling herself the cherished wife of one, not only claiming the highest kindred in Judah, but brought by birth nearest to his God, felt not that that God's commandments had been broken when she became his bride.

But it was not so with Manasseh. In the brightest sky that ever shone over two united hearts—two, excellent in beauty, riches, grace, and intellect, there hung the cloud of sin! In the gayest scenes he saw its gloom; in the happiest hour he felt its chill. There was the bröken covenant; and, however sophistry might disguise or obduracy forget, there were times, when a conciousness of transgression would spread its alloy over the heart's most exquisite enjoyments.

Still Manasseh saw not his guilt in its full extent. There is in the human mind a fearful power of compromise, a dangerous disposition to seek, by a strict observance of many duties, impunity for the one besetting sin; and without arrogance, Manasseh might have defied aught of blame, in the bright purity and active benevolence of the life he led.

Though yet uncalled to his full ministry in the temple, and by reason of his age still in his noviciate, the days of Manasseh

were passed in a course of piety and that high-souled devotion, which, while it points to God as all its end, sheds joy and pleasure on every passing hour; and from the nature of his vocation and birth, every facility was afforded for the most perfect enjoyment of an intellectual and virtuous life.

By the munificent wisdom of the governor, means for the subsistence of the priesthood had been amply provided; and they were thus exempt from the common cares of life. The leisure and means of mental cultivation were also fully furnished. Multiplied copies of the sacred books of Israel, on which a large expenditure of wealth and labour had been devoted;—the works of wisdom and genius of other countries—the sublime poesy of Greece—the Persian fables—the legends of India—the mystic writings of Egypt, were attainable to all who partook of sacerdotal privileges; presenting a vivid source of interest and occupation to the already-taught mind which knew how to appreciate the literary trea-

sury. Music, which had sunk to the plaintive sighing of the exile, during the Babylonian captivity, now again assumed its powerful influence in the religious services of the Jews; and the harps of Zion sounded forth in the rich psalmody of their minstrel king; while the voices of youths and maidens, attuned to the inspired strains, proclaimed the glories of God and his mercies to his people Israel.

Whether in his literary studies, or in the cultivation of music, scarcely less intellectual in the elevated light in which it then shone, Nicazo was ever the intelligent companion of her husband; and lent a charm, by her grace and genius, to his every pursuit. Softer pleasures were not wanting. And when, as time passed on, Manasseh found himself the father of two bright and lovely boys—buds promising future perfection, the sense of his disobedience became lighter to his mind; and, alive only to the exquisite joys of the present, he forgot alike the errors of the past, und the considera-

tion of the future. Everything seemed to smile on Manasseh and his beautiful Nicazo; and though, from an instinctive feeling rather than a studied motive, he lived apart from all the stirring business of the reanimated city, still he was sought by many. Friends and acquaintance joyfully assembled beneath a roof, where to the charms of intellectual pleasures were added kindness and affection, with the power of showing unlimited hospitality. In the union of his daughter with one claiming such high affinity in the Jewish genealogy, Sanballat found so much of his heart's ambition gratified, that he most gladly administered to the pleasures and luxuries of his grateful child.

Withheld by the stern decree of Nehemiah, which forbade the abode of those of the strange nations in the holy city, from witnessing the felicity of Manasseh and Nicazo in their own home, Sanballat claimed from them their frequent presence in Sichem; they visited with him also many

beautiful spots in the fair land of Samaria, where his duties as governor required his occasional abiding.

The sterility which now meets the eye of the traveller in the once smiling country Palestine, has displaced the orange grove, the vineyard, and the forest; and the desolation which now extends through the land, giving, with its blasted look, its soil of rock and ashes, the appearance of an exhausted volcano, was then a range of cultivated country, teeming with fruit and flowers, rejoicing in every variety of climate; and from its fertilized hills and sheltered valleys, yielded at once the products of the torrid zone, and the hardier growth of more northern vegetation. The struggle of civil dissension—the ravages of the invader—the tyranny of the Moslem, had not then come into action. The curse * had yet to be fulfilled; and the beauteous land was then, indeed, worthy to be the scene of God's communion with man,—worthy to be the

* See Appendix, note 10.

possession of the holy race to whom such gracious privileges were vouchsafed. In sad illustration of the corruption of man, we know that, notwithstanding the clear light bestowed on them, they chose darkness; we know that, rather than enjoy the proved happiness resulting from obedience to their God, they chose transgression; and we see the beautiful land of promise struck by the arm of Omnipotence; a devastated region given up to the robber and barbarian, spoiled, desolate, accursed of God.

And yet how unsuspecting were those who wandered amidst these scenes of unmatched loveliness, of all the direful change which should ensue; even those who had "forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers,"—and, therefore, in their own persons had incurred the curse upon their land. But thus it is, even now. Men, like Manasseh, walking in scriptural light, and with their every faculty awake to the wisdom and omnipotence of God, are yet blind

to the truth of their own position—blind to the part they take in God's broken covenant,—blind to the solemn denouncement recorded against crime and transgression. Even now the written curse hangs over each devoted head; and yet men sin, and do despite to the Spirit of grace!

CHAPTER XI.

AMONG the first circumstances which betokened the absence of Nehemiah, was the partial return of those strangers within the walls of Jerusalem, who had been so rigorously excluded by the wisdom and foresight of the Tirshatha. This quick relapse into the errors of the past, was a fearful proof of the want of resistance in the principles of the Jews, which could recur thus easily to so fertile a cause of their national sin and consequent tribulation. But in individual instances there was a deep feeling of satisfaction at the liberty thus gained; and families who, by the forbidden marriages,

had been widely separated from their kindred, now flew to a happy meeting.

Nicazo partook of these pleasures; and when she found herself once more rejoicing in the sweet affection of her friend Zeruah, the daughter of Meshullam, again listening to words of wit and genius from Maachah, the accomplished wife of Tobiah,—even her gentle and uncavilling spirit began to question the policy of the Jewish ruler, which had exiled, with its broad and strict regulations, innocent and guileless women from the city of their kindred.

Manasseh, who surmised that it was in consequence of his own high parentage, and in a degree owing to the extreme seclusion of his habits, that the decree of Nehemiah had never been been brought in force against the Samaritan Nicazo, had difficulty in replying to her doubts and questions.

Passing events caused him to attach higher consideration to the policy observed by the Tirshatha, than he had hitherto

done. And all unworldly as he was—unpractised in the motives and machinations of men—living only for the softer affections of the heart, the lofty aspirations of the mind—even he, the recluse Manasseh, saw that there was evil in store for the holy city, by the means of those who now crept within her walls. There was still a deeper impression of dissatisfaction weighing on his spirits. He felt that it was through himself that innovations were to be made, concessions to be gained; and that in the double relation of son-in-law to the governor of Samaria, and grandson to Eliashib, his friendliness was depended on, and his interest with the higher authorities claimed. It was a position of doubt and difficulty; one which made him review some occurrences of the past with the eye of newly-awakened suspicion.

In his occasional visits to Sanballat, Manasseh had frequently encountered Tobiah, still the firm ally and apparent friend of the Samaritan governor. In spite of the marked

regard and deferential court paid to him by the Ammonite, Manasseh had never experienced for him that warmth of friendship which this demeanour had almost demanded. He had blamed himself for the moroseness; and felt that the alienation, which he experienced when an opposite feeling was most called for, was a stigma on the kindliness of his own nature. But so it was. And even while receiving protestations and acts of kindness from the courteous Ammonite, he had shrunk from his quick and searching glances with a feeling of dislike akin to dread.

Still was he courted by Tobiah, flattered, followed, and overwhelmed with all the gifts and attention to his slightest wish, which it is in the power of those, commanding wealth like the Ammonite, to confer. But it stopped not here as heretofore. There was now always some trifling favour required in return; and things, nothing in themselves when looked at singly, reviewed in the aggregate, amounted to thus much,—

that Manasseh found, by his own personal interference and assistance, that Tobiah and his son, the brilliant, open-hearted Johanan, were known intimately and favourably to most of the rulers in Jerusalem; and, what was more remarkable, now the means through which they had attained it were forgotten, the Ammonite was in strict amity with Eliashib, the venerable high priest, who, by his pure and holy descent, was of all others the least likely to tolerate the presence of the heathen.

Though himself allied to the enemies of Jerusalem, with the inborn feeling of one so near the sacerdotal office, Manasseh reflected with bitterness and sorrow on the innovation. He felt that it must be staid, and gave serious and anxious thoughts as to the means. Difficulty on difficulty met his reflections. The position gained by gradual movements, he was aware, demanded the same gradual proceeding to undo; but for either a sudden or gentle overthrow to the measures of Tobiah, Manasseh felt

himself unequal. Indeed, with all the newly-awakened dissatisfaction rankling in his heart at each passing event, he found that even the hindrance, that a show of his disapprobation might prove, was almost beyond his power, without an interference in public measures, which, to the peaceful philosopher, the student, the man bound to his quiet home by the dearest ties, was a measure his every feeling shrank from.

And how was he to avoid receiving Tobiah at his dwelling, without at once proclaiming that from henceforth they were to be as enemies? How was he, without an open rupture, to reject the generous courtesies, which now in some jewelled toy—in gifts of costly stuffs from India—in the rich wines of Greece—the illustrated manuscripts from Italy; in short, in all that was rare and difficult to obtain, was constantly calling for the warmest expression of gratitude from his children, from Nicazo, nay, from himself. The idea was in itself most repugnant to his nature. Still more would it

have been, to have excluded from his house those amiable and affectionate women, whose presence there was so much coveted. How could he forbid Nicazo to associate with those she so dearly loved? Yet it was through their means that obligation was day by day heaped on his family. And what was more, by his own Nicazo, the loved and loving one, every sympton of his coldness towards the Ammonites was remonstrated with and deplored.

It was a painful state of affairs. Time passed on. At every fresh evidence of the growing influence of Tobiah and his son—every proof that there was design in all he did—a result expected—a deep, though distant aim in all his actions—a pang of sorrow and self-reproach passed through the heart of Manasseh. He felt his own instrumentality in all that occurred, and learnt to look upon his connexion with the enemies of Jerusalem in a new light.

For the first time, he saw in his marriage a fertile cause of evil and anxiety. The

glow of youth, which had thrown its false light over everything connected with the beautiful Nicazo, had now given place to the more correct view of maturer years. She was still adored as ardently as ever;—her gentle and pure mind—her intelligence, virtues, and loveliness, all as dearly prized; but, and the thought gave a pang more acute than he had ever yet experienced, he now felt that his union with her was too nearly akin to sin, to promise a continuance of the felicity which had blessed their first years of wedded love.

Brought up in a religion, which was strictly a dispensation of temporal punishments, the Jew, once awakened to a knowledge of his guilt, felt, in the same moment, as if the hand of judgment was stretched forth towards him. Terror-struck, he bethought him of the sacrifices instituted by a merciful God, which, as a token of faith in his promises, and the purposed forsaking of his sin, were accepted as expiatory. That better time, when the whole of the Levitical

observances were to be done away with, by the one sufficient sacrifice for sin, of which all others were but the type, and to which the whole Mosaic dispensation pointed, was as yet afar off. And in those cases, where the self-convicted transgressor felt in his own person how inadequate was the blood of bulls and goats to take away his guilt, when he still clung with all the fervour of corruption—all the unhelped weakness of unredeemed man—to the one loved sin, there was a fearful looking for judgment—an apprehension rendered more acute by the lengthened catalogue of examples, offered by the Holy Scriptures, of punishment falling with quick and fatal force upon the evil doers.* Some such feelings of tribulation began to pervade the hitherto tranquil bosom of Manasseh; and deeply as he loved the fair being, who had been the rock of stumbling in his path; in hours of loneliness, thoughts of sorrow and distress presented themselves, as clearer views of the nature of his marriage occurred to him.

* See Appendix, note 11.

Is it not always so? Has there ever been an union for which any duty has been sacrificed—any commandment disobeyed—any propriety infringed, that, sooner or later, does not assume its true character in the eyes of those who have formed it, bringing to the soul a sickly sense of remorse for irremediable sin? In most cases, alienation and disgust take the place of the tenderness and admiration which first led to the forbidden alliance; and too late each offender learns, that a tie, promising the best sample of earthly happiness, when formed with a consideration of our duty towards God and our neighbour, carries with it its own curse, if aught of guilt hangs over it.

There was one care, one deep anxiety, which pervaded the bosom of Manasseh. It was to conceal from the meek-hearted Nicazo the new impression arising in his mind, regarding his marriage with herself. She, all pure, all innocent;—she, who, by reason of the false colour thrown over her actual position by her ambitious father, and

the kindness of friends and dependents, knew not that the descendant of Aaron had sinned before his God, when uniting himself with her;—how would she bear the consciousness that her husband, so respected and adored, now looked with shrinking and vain remorse on a marriage which had brought such felicity to them both! The day might come when the dread secret could not be concealed from her; Manasseh feared that it would be so. But he resolved that not until then should the barbed arrow rankle in her heart.

That some sorrow pressed heavily upon her husband, the love-lightened eyes of Nicazo were not long in perceiving. Kind and anxious questioning ensued; and Manasseh feigned, in attributing wholly to the consideration of some of the events then occurring in Jerusalem, the care which filled his bosom. It was the first dissimulation used towards the open-hearted Nicazo. The son of Joiada felt that the necessity of such was one among the many evils

arising from the connexion he had formed, and not the least to be deplored, in an union where sincerity is, as it were, the talisman to insure love and happiness. However, this good resulted from having drawn her attention to the point, that Nicazo, learning how singularly Tobiah and his son Johanan were subverting all the rules established by the Tirshatha, and upheld by the chief rulers then in Jerusalem, herself suggested that it must not be through the influence of Manasseh, and the weight his birth gave him in the city, that the innovation should be furthered; and proposed that further favours and intimacy should be avoided. In the candour of her spirit, she decided that this must not be done covertly; and that her friends Zeruah and Maachah should not be left to put their own constructions on the newly-adopted coldness; but be at once told that their affinity with those whose conduct became questionable to the upright inhabitants of Zion, was the cause of avoidance.

Sanballat, at this period, occupied in affairs more immediately connected with Samaria, had no part in the cabal. This left the actions of Manasseh more unfettered; and as matters proceeded, he scrupled not to show that he considered Tobiah and some others in the light of enemies to Jerusalem.

The disapprobation felt by Manasseh at the proceedings of the Ammonites, was late in being manifested; and it had no other effect than that of completely estranging them from their previous intimacy with him, and confirming them in feelings of enmity towards himself—feelings which he was sensible had been called up, on first perceiving his backwardness in facilitating the underhanded measures pursued by them, in order to ingratiate themselves with Eliashib, and others high in office in Jerusalem. To his opposition or alliance they were now, however, alike indifferent; and Manasseh, conscience-stricken and appalled, saw how great was their power in the counsels of the

city. How much of self-reproach, mingled with the reflection that it was by his means that the crafty and ambitious Tobiah had first gained access to the rulers, whom he had so successfully brought over to his views! How much of conscience, mingled with his newly-awakened perceptions of the Divine wisdom, which had forbidden the intermarriages of Israel with the strange nations!

CHAPTER XII.

Evil increased. Well might the prophet Malachi, among the glorious promises which from time to time were sent forth from his secret solitude, denounce the workers of iniquity. "Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble."* Well might he cry, "Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and in offerings."† They had indeed robbed God. His holy worship

* Malachi iv. 1. † Ibid. iii. 8.

was discontinued; the portions appropriated to the service of the priests withheld. Still was there mercy in the song of the divine messenger, and the inspired voice proclaimed, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts."*

The word was true. Nehemiah was once more sent to the disloyal Israelites, and again for a period the Lord comforted his people. For his name's sake, God deferred his anger; for his praise did he refrain, that those, whose neck was as an iron sinew, so strong was their perverseness, were not cut off. O that they had hearkened for ever unto the commandments of the holy one of Israel! then had their peace been as a river, their righteousness as the waves of the sea. But still were they trespassers, still to be

* Malachi iii. 6, 7.

tried by the furnace of affliction; desolation and destruction, and the famine, and the sword, have come upon them. They have drunken to the dregs of the cup of trembling, yet still the promise of the God of their fathers is theirs. Still may the people of Judah rejoice, still may they hope that the acceptable year is not afar off, when "they shall have beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; when for their shame they shall have double, for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion; when in their land they shall possess the double, when everlasting joy shall be unto them."

There is no passage of Scripture which declares the final rejection and abandonment of the Jewish nation; and though the moment for their return to the favour of their God is now darkly veiled by the mysterious future, that it is to be, we surely know.

The subject is of deep and surpassing interest. Even now the long-denied pri-

vilege of weeping among the ruins of Zion is acceded, and the exiled Jew can again inhabit the holy city. Men fail not to see in this a precursive evidence of their final restoration. But it would be comparatively a small matter that the Jews went back to Canaan, that they should be established within its borders, if they still remain in their present state of alienation from the knowledge and faith of Christ. Until they worship the rejected-One, until they look with sorrowful, yet grateful adoration on Him whom they pierced, prophecy, which tells that the Jews shall one day be converted, will be yet unfulfilled, the glories of the millennial days are yet retarded. It is to their christianization, then, that all eyes turn; it is for their admission into the Saviour's fold, that the prayer of the helpless, the vigour of the strong, the wisdom of the learned, the riches of the wealthy, the influence of the powerful, are directed. It is to a great and happy period we look; for "if the fall of the Jews be the riches of the

world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness? For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the reconciling of them be, but life from the dead?" Well may the apostle ask, "How much more?" Words cannot estimate or declare aright so vast a blessing. It will at once proclaim the power, providence, fidelity, and goodness of God, the faithfulness of prophecy, the truth of Christianity. Faith will then be sight, hope fruition, and charity universal. The Jew and Gentile have never been conjoined in the same worship, since that period when the Redeemer walked this earth. A plain analogy occurs; at his second coming again an universality of worship will be established. What then will be that charity, when one God, one Saviour, one holy Spirit, reigns in all the hearts of men? "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from

Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim."*

That comprehensive glance which enables those who exist in these mose advanced ages of the world, to see the wonders that have passed, and assists them in their contemplation of the future, was denied to the generality of the Jews at the period of which we write. They lived but for the present; days of doubt and difficulty; and still under the curse their disobedience had drawn down upon them, struggled on, a prey to the corruptions of their nature, or victims to the laws they had so impiously disregarded.

* Isa. xi. 11—13.

But there were still among them, those who looked for the hope of Israel, those who spiritually and in reality kept the word of God as "a token upon their hands, as frontlets between their eyes."*

To such, how joyfully, how thankfully, was the return of the Tirshatha hailed! They looked upon it in its true light, as an evidence of the continued mercy of God.

Wanting the vigour of the divinely inspired mind of Nehemiah, the influence which his high authority claimed, they had mourned, but could not remedy the growing evil of the city; and saw fast passing away the worship of the great Jehovah, and the observance of the laws he had laid before them. But prompt and all-efficient were the measures adopted by Nehemiah to remedy the iniquity which abounded; and we may conceive how greatly he must have marvelled at the sinful tendency of his countrymen, which during the short period

* Exodus xiii. 16.

of two years, had so completely worked mischief.

The first act of the renewed government of the Tirshatha, was at once to rid the temple of a desecration it were difficult to conceive should ever have occurred, considering how strict were the rules against the profanation of its sacred precincts. And what a tale it told of the craft and wily nature of the Ammonite, which had so far worked upon the yielding disposition of the venerable High Priest, that a portion of the house of God, set apart aforetime to contain the different property consecrated to the service of the holy Temple, had been given up by him to Tobiah for a residence,

It was an outrage which called for immediate reprehension; and with grief at his heart, and feelings of pious indignation, Nehemiah commanded the possessions of Tobiah to be cast forth, and the chambers cleansed from the pollution, in which light this secular appropiration of them could only

be considered. Again the vessels used in the temple, the frankincense and the offerings for sacrifice were replaced in the apartments originally assigned to them.

The act was summary and decisive, and consistent with the enegy and righteous character of the Governor; yet Tobiah looked for some further motive; and knowing that Manasseh had uttered remonstrances, in his office of Priest, to the too facile Eliashib, at the secularization of aught belonging to the temple, believed this promptness had arisen from representations made from the same source to the newly-arrived Governor. A bitter curse, and a deep-breathed vow of revenge, were the results of this belief.

The reforms enacted by Nehemiah staid not here. Again were all the ordinances for the house of God put in force—the abuses abolished—the tithes of corn, and wine, and oil, again brought into the treasuries, over which were appointed men of proved faithfulness and probity.

The desecration of the sabbath also came under the vigilant observation of the Tirshatha; and reproaching the nobles of Judah with the profanation—reminding them, that for sueh doings God had already brought evil upon the city—that they still called for his wrath upon Israel by suffering such things to be, Nehemiah made those rules, that the merchants and sellers, whose wont it had been to dispose of their ware on the sabbath, were now excluded from entering its gates on that holy day.

In reading of the disregard of the people of Israel to the commandments of God; and that too at a time when the divine books had again been restored, and were read publicly, as well as studied in private; it may seem strange that the laws of Moses appear in so many instances to be overlooked. Thus, however, it was. And it leads to the idea, that at a period of judgment and calamity foretold so distinctly by the inspired word of prophecy; aud when, of course, there must have been a propor-

tionate reliance on the predictions perpetually renewed, of the glories and properity still in store for the people of Jerusalem, that the prophets were more studied than the law.*

From the peculiar sublimity of the prophecies of Isaiah, the force and magnificence of his style, the attention of Jew and Christian have been more closely turned to this book than to any other. The distinct manner in which the great prophet speaks of the birth and sufferings of Christ and the glories of his kingdom, at once accounts for the preference shown by the latter, and we cannot wonder that he was called by St. Jerome "the Evangelical Prophet." But the Jews have equal reason to look with reverence to one, of whose predictions their scriptures themselves declare the fulfilment.

At the period of this history, the writings of the son of Amos must have exercised a powerful influence over the minds of the

* See Appendix, note 12.

inhabitants of Zion, who, reading the predictions of that desolation which was to bow the glories of Jerusalem to the earth, saw around them the consummation of the prophecy, in the still remaining devastation which told of the Babylonian spoiler. And what must have been their trust in the majestic strains of the sweet-toned Isaiah, which spoke of deliverance and joy, when, even in their own times, the fulfilment began to be accomplished! We cannot—need not wonder then, that the Prophets, on whose lips the wisdom of heaven had burned, should be better known than the more practical parts of the inspired word. The constant backslidings of the people of Israel during this period, corroborate the belief of their inattention to the "weightier matters of the law."

After the reformation effected by Nehemiah in the affairs connected with the worship of the holy temple, he again revived the public reading of the Scriptures; a custom which had fallen into disuse in his

absence. As if intending to point out more fully the strange corruption which had suffered the house of God to be profaned by the presence and residence of one, of the strange nations within its gates, on the first day "they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people: and therein was found written that the *Ammonite* and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever; because they met not the children of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing."*

In the quick revocation of their errors which took place, surely we may see, that in ignorance rather than in wilfulness, some of the Jews had transgressed; for we read that, when they had heard the word of the law,† they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.

* Nehemiah xiii. 1, 2. † See Appendix, note 13.

CHAPTER XIII.

The service of the Temple kept Manasseh from the synagogue on that day on which the Book of Moses was read to the people, therefore Nicazo remained within her own quiet home. But the curse of the law, had it fallen on her ears, would scarcely have appalled her; her retired life, and carefully blinded perceptions, had left her so utterly unconscious of the position in which she stood.

But there was one present at that reading of the law, whose malignant heart drank up greedily the words as they fell from the lips of the Levite, who translated them into

the Chaldee dialect, for the benefit of those to whom the Hebrew language had become almost unknown. Tobiah had joined the throngs assembled beneath the raised building, from which the word of God was read; not from any purpose of piety, but that by means of the great assembly he might ascertain the disposition of those who, previous to the return of Nehemiah to Jerusalem, had shown themselves his friends.

Fiercely gleamed the eye of the Ammonite as the excluding clause against his tribe grated on his ear. A muttered curse trembled on his lips; but quickly were they compressed with something like a sensation of joy, as, with the quickness of lightning, a thought flashed across his mind—a thought bearing with it the devastation of the thundercloud. The Moabite!—was he not one to be cast also from the congregation of God's chosen? Sanballat!—was he not of Horonaim in Moab?—Was not the child of the Horonite included in the withering sentence of the law? What a thrill of horrible

joy passed through the frame of the base Tobiah at the anticipation and deadly purpose of revenge!

Brief was the space which was suffered to intervene, before the means were pursued by which he hurled vengeance on the head of him, whose by-gone opposition to his measures had never left the mischief-brooding heart of one, who had once fancied that with his arts he had formed a tool of the young Priest, by whom his iniquity might be furthered.

A message of insulting language, but strong in facts, strict in detail, and true and deadly in its aim, was at once sent to the Tirshatha. The parentage and descent of Nicazo were all minutely unfolded—her marriage with Manasseh—her being the mother of his sons—her long residence within the walls of Jerusalem. And then scornful aspersions were cast on the justice of the Governor, who thus tolerated the transgressions of those of high descent, while visiting with severity the minutest

infringements of the law, upon those who, lowly and of small consideration, had no appeal from his grinding tyranny.

The shaft was hurled; the stroke was fatal. Already had Nehemiah, in his jealous watchfulness for the glory of God and the welfare of his people, discovered, since his return, many among the Jews who had transgressed in marrying strange wives. Struck with horror at that disregard to the preservation of a pure genealogy—that carelessness to the intermixture with the blood of the stranger, from which the families of Israel were to be so sacredly preserved, and upon which hung so much of hope and future glory,—he had contended with, and cursed the degenerate offenders. But the sin of Manasseh was yet unknown to him; and he dreamed not, that one in whose veins ran that pure blood so strictly watched over by a powerful theocracy—that straight descent from the founder of the priesthood—should be lost in the offspring of a Moabitish woman!

As if by a tacit compact, and from indulgence and respectful affection to one so nearly allied to the chief priest, and to his son and successor to the sacerdotal chair, none had breathed a word of the transgression of Manasseh. His life of retirement and study had facilitated the concealment; and, but for the perfidy of the Ammonite, still might his sin have been covered.

But it is rare that such impunity is afforded to the evil doer. Every one's experience shows them how suddenly iniquity is exposed, how quickly punished; and that, too, when long-continued security bids the transgressor almost forget how much he has erred.

Every feeling of the Tirshatha was called into action by the denouncement of Tobiah, and it wanted not the fierce taunts at his supposed injustice—the accusations of favouritism—to urge him to immediate notice of the important information, while his breast was filled with grief at the intelligence that the covenant of the priesthood had been so

defiled. We can believe that one hope softened his dissatisfaction, and that was, that the tale of the Ammonite was false, and framed in vengeance for the dealings of the governor of Jerusalem towards himself.

An order was conveyed to Manasseh by two Levites, that on the following morning he should attend the Tirshatha at his palace.

The heart of the son of Joiada beat tumultuously within his bosom. The command was unexpected. Nothing had arisen in any way to bring him in contact with the Governor; and, in consequence, the order for his attendance was looked upon with the misgivings of one whose conscience stands convicted of transgression. It was his anxious care to conceal his peturbation from the tender and loving Nicazo. But too known was each expression of his features, for him to succeed in disguising entirely the agitation which oppressed him. Utterly

unconscious to what point his anxiety turned, she lingered by him with all the fond concern, the expecting interest, which sought, though it asked no explanation.

None could be given. Was he to pain that gentle heart by bidding it anticipate that, which he could scarcely suffer his mind to dwell upon, without uttering screams of desperate frenzy? Was he to tell her, that something like the mandate which had again bid Zeruah and the wife of Tobiah choose between clinging to their husbands and the city of their kindred, now hung over her head? She, whose love for him was woven in the very fibres of her heart? Oh! no. Better the most refined deceit, the sternest denial to her fond questioning, than too soon to shake her frail hold on happiness.

The night passed sleeplessly away; sighs and inward groaning marked the sorrowful vigil, and long and lingering seemed each sad hour; and yet, when the full dawn was come, Manasseh thought it came too quickly,

and would have willed his meeting with the righteous Tirshatha still more distant.

Manasseh stood by the couch of his sleeping wife—stood in silence, but in writhing, convulsive agony. She lay in calm, unconscious beauty. Her half-closed lips showed the pearly teeth which peeped between the crimson screen; her fair, sunny forehead spoke of the gentle, guileless soul beneath; her closed lids hid her bright eyes so fraught with love and intelligence, but their dark fringes rested on cheeks of loveliness, that wanted naught to heighten the touching picture. Yet there was one more object that spoke deeper to the heart of Manasseh. Glittering on that soft cheek hung a tear-drop still. It told that sorrow had heralded the calm sleep which now hung over her.

There was something in this breathless slumber like unto death. And the thought rose to the mind of Manasseh, that perhaps it were even better that it should be so, and that life, and the bitter suffering which he feared was in store for her, were at once

ended. A flood of scalding tears dropped from his eyes; and when man weeps, all may know the heart's deep suffering. He stooped to kiss the beloved being who lay so serene in her loveliness. She awoke at the moment, and that moment showed her all the desolating grief which harrowed the heart of Manasseh. Her arms were extended spontaneously towards him as he bent over her; but, shrinking from her touch, he rushed from out the chamber.

This last act, and the recollection of all the sadness of the preceding day, at once renewed the vague terrors which had disturbed Nicazo. That there was evil she became painfully convinced; but from what quarter it was to come or to be dreaded, she knew not; and how difficult to support were the silence and solitude of the morning hour.

She bade them bring her children, her two beautiful boys, whose young, loving hearts and bright intelligent minds, even to the fond mother, outshone their comeli-

ness. They came in sorrow and in tears. Even their attendant veiled her face as she entered; but her loud sobs told of some affliction.

For a moment Nicazo could not speak. She felt that certainty for uncertainty was about to be exchanged; and for a brief interval she feared to seek it. At last, nerving herself to the utmost, she asked, in a low, broken voice, "Kadma, dost thou know what is the business that has taken thy master forth so early?"

"No, dear lady. Thy servant knew not that my lord had left his dwelling," was the answer given between each sob. Its tenor gave something like a ray of consolation; but it was of brief duration.

Turning to her first-born, who seemed the most tranquil of the three, though an angry fire flashed in his young eye, and his lip quivered with scorn and suppressed emotion, Nicazo asked the meaning of all she saw.

"Adaiah and his nurse are weeping, be-

cause poor Kezia, the wife of Akkub the porter, and all her children, are just sent from Jerusalem; and we saw them pass our door, with the crowd which went with them; and poor Akkub, with sackcloth, and ashes on his head, mourning to lose his children; —and we cried too."

"And why are they sent from Jerusalem?" inquired Nicazo.

"Because the Tirshatha says, that all those who have married strange wives are sinners, and must separate from them."

A bolt of ice struck to the heart of the Samaritan; but she had to hear still more overwhelming words as the boy continued. "But, mother, this is not all. Some in the crowd said that we too were Moabites; and that the Lord Nehemiah was unjust, and favoured the high, and oppressed the lowly. And then one among them said that it was not so, that the great Tirshatha had even then commanded the son of Joiada, the proud Manasseh, to put us away from him. I told the man that he lied before God, and

that it was false; but it is that which makes poor Adaiah cry."

A sharp, quick cry broke from the lips of Nicazo as these words met her ear. What fatal corroboration they bore to all that had gone before! Had she not read the life-struggle in her husband's agitation? That last sad kiss—did it not speak of separation? Alas! yes. She sank on her knees. A prayer for mercy to the most High broke spontaneously from her ashy lips. She extended her arms to her children, and the two mourning boys flew to her bosom. Long they wept; the attendant standing by in speechless consternation.

At length the mother's feelings struggled with those of the despairing wife. It was a cruel sight to witness the grief of those young things, grief not the less acute, though vague, and rather catching the tone from her affliction. So, for a while she bore up, and masked her sorrow, the better to cheat them into forgetfulness of their own. She sent them to their sports. They left

her slowly and unwillingly; but soon she heard the ringing laugh, the quick trample, the jump, the merry voices loud in discussion.

How quick the young heart rebounds from grief to joy! Nicazo was glad that it was so. She had debarred herself from the slight comfort their presence gave, that they should lose the thoughts of sorrow; but yet their mirth came like discord upon her ear. Again her tears poured forth; thick choking sobs burst from the heart which ached with the bitterness of its woe. She would not that her boys should see her thus in her desolation. She feared alike to pain the gentle breast of Adaiah, who owned a sensitiveness too like her own, and to awaken more the fierce spirit of her first-born, whose grief had even now all the character of anger. She therefore sought a lone and distant chamber, there to abide in solitude and in tearful prayer what next might come.

A message was brought her from Ma-

nasseh. It bade her not look for his return until eventide. She bent her head low upon her knees. Still darker seemed the storm-cloud which gathered over her. Now she dared not hope that fear had forestalled facts. Truth seemed written in dark and heavy characters on all that had passed. And Manasseh—did not his loving heart shrink from the bitter deed they required of him? Put away the wife of his bosom—his little ones! Could he do this? Alas! alas! *he must;* and she saw in the late hour named for his return, that he sought for time and fortitude to inflict the stroke. Could he but know that it had fallen!—that crushed—breaking—her heart yearned even to agony for one look—one embrace from him who could alone comfort her in this time of need. But the hours must pass in loneliness and misery away; with none to assuage, none even to whisper pity to her suffering bosom.

CHAPTER XIV.

FEW were the words spoken by the righteous Tirshatha, when the son of Joiada was shown into his presence. The truth of the denouncement was inquired into; and, that ascertained, in terms of high authority Manasseh was exhorted to separate himself from a wife, by reason of whose birth, scandal was brought on the priesthood, and the trespass of Israel increased.

Manasseh attempted some palliation of his transgression. He spoke of Nicazo, wise in heavenly lore, and of virtue corresponding with her intelligence; but he was not listened to. The fact of her being the

child of Sanballat the Horonite was admitted; and as such the mandate was issued, that she and her offspring should be put away. The law of God recognized nothing conditional,—no stipulation or compounding with sin. The divine commandments were infringed, or they were not; and those who watched over their observance had but one course to pursue. Thus the separation of Manasseh from the daughter of the Horonite was finally insisted upon.*

There was a solemn pause. The son of Joiada felt that the stroke of death could scarcely have brought more suffering to his soul. With the intense anguish of that moment, past years of happiness were dearly bought. Judgment was come upon his sin. He felt that it was so;—felt that it had been a guilty and fearful blindness which had closed his eyes in times past, to the extent of his trangression, and to the prospect of its penalty. Still, in the desperation with which he would have shrunk from the sword

* See Appendix, note 14.

of the destroyer, in the perfect hopelessness of heart, which, interwoven as it was with the affections of husband and father, felt it could break, but not part with its treasures, he shrieked aloud his determination of sharing the exile of his wife and children from Jerusalem.

A loud murmur rang through the hall of audience. The Tirshatha arose quickly. Sorrowful surprise and stern displeasure were at once shown by the deep, serious look fixed on the wretched Manasseh, while his holy brow was ruffled with indignation at the apostasy of the descendant of Aaron, at the exhibition of human passion, which could thus prompt to the defilement of the priesthood, thus break God's sacred covenant. But no further word was spoken, and the son of Joiada was driven from the presence of the offended governor.*

Stricken, stunned by the intensity of his feelings, Manasseh paused for a moment beneath the portico of the ruler's palace.

* Nehemiah xiii. 28.

The words he had so rashly uttered, still rang in his ears. He had spoken his own banishment from Zion, and now with all the sympathies, prejudices, hopes of the Jew, his very soul quailed at the alternative he had chosen.

Quit for ever the holy city! Divest himself of the garments of the Priesthood, resign the sacerdotal office, which proclaimed his high and unmixed genealogy, take on him the lowliness of the outcast, the degradation of the homeless! Every antecedent feeling of his nature forbade it.

But there was a sterner, more unanswerable objection to the path, which in the paroxysm of his frenzy he had dared to choose. In turning his face from Zion, was it not from his God that he would turn? In withdrawing himself from the service of the Temple, to which from his birth he had been consecrated, would he not with the worship virtually resign all participation in the providence of that Almighty God, of whose mercies and judgments his scripture

lore had afforded him so intimate a knowledge? He shuddered; for the moment he recoiled from the idea of the fair being for whom all this vast sacrifice was contemplated. Was she not the serpent in his path, the stumblingblock placed there by Satan?

At this moment of perplexity and despair a wise thought came to the mind of the distracted man. He would seek God's Temple. There, in the quiet of its sacred courts, seek by prayer and that calm examination of his position, which was so necessary, a better knowledge of the difficulties before him; and perchance ere his final resolve was taken, in the counsel of some brother in the priesthood, some friend, gain a clearer understanding of his duties.

Thus determined, Manasseh despatched a messenger to advertise Nicazo of his lengthened absence, and springing rapidly away, hurried to the Temple, fearing to commune more with himself, until prayer had somewhat staid the tumult of his maddened heart.

There was too much of passion, too much of earthly feeling, mixed up with the deference for holy things, which led Manasseh to the house of God, for him to find within its sanctuary the tranquillizing influence that he sought.

Pacing with hurried steps the vast courts of the Temple, he tried to meditate, but there was one image which banished all calm reflection. It was that of the poor Nicazo, weeping, broken-hearted in her desolation. And then he prayed; but the softened feeling brought by communion with his heavenly Father, caused the big tears to rush in torrents from his eyes, and sobs burst from his grief-charged breast. He flew to the chamber of one, whose high and lofty character held captive the respect of all men, and yet whose gentleness of heart kept pace with his uncompromising piety, whose warmth of disposition equalled his integrity, one who loved his God with all his strength, his neighbour as himself.

By the venerable Pedaiah, Manasseh judged well that every point of his difficult position would be rightly understood, and that his duties as a husband and father would be equally considered with those, which as a priest of the temple and a citizen of Jerusalem rested upon him.

Long and agitating was the conference. At its conclusion, Manasseh rose with the firm though peace-withering conviction that the dissolving of his ill-fated marriage was imperatively called for by every consideration, whether of religion, country, or of kindred. But it was by no unfeeling argument, that Pedaiah had wrought this awaking to the paramount claims which the God of his father—which the city of his tribe, held over the ties of an union, whose commencement and continuation were alike flagrant disobedience to the divine command.

The venerable man had fully entered into everything connected with the subject. The love of Nicazo—the hopes of her chil-

dren were considered with tenderness and interest; and matter concerning her future welfare was discussed; but still he swerved not from his first spoken opinion, that Manasseh, by earthly as well as by divine laws, by considerations for himself, and all those to whom his example might offer such fatal precedent, was required to separate from his mischosen wife.

"Go, my son," the aged Pedaiah concluded, as Manasseh turned to withdraw, "go—and shrink not from what your sin has drawn down upon you. Rejoice rather that it is yet in your power to make this sacrifice to an offended God. Go—and as you value your future peace, be firm. Let not the beauty, the love of Nicazo, change your virtuous purpose. Steel your heart towards the blandishments which may be called up against you—against tender and tearful supplications. Even now the rumour which has gone forth of the Tirshatha's decree, has doubtless reached her;—even now are prepared

the charms, and all the pretty arts of loveliness, which won, and will be used to stay your purpose. Nay, I speak not disparagingly," added the old man, seeing a pang of anguish pass over the features of Manasseh; but which arose from the newly-awakened idea that Nicazo knew of the stroke which awaited them—"I seek not to condemn, but to guard. They are women's weapons, and may be fairly used. But when your eyes rest on the adorned beauty of the Samaritan,—the braided and lustrous hair—the jewelled brow—the costly apparel;—when you meet the tender radiance of her looks—hear her soft plaints—find her with her comely boys prepared to take you by your heart's affections, remember that outlandish women caused even the wise Solomon to sin; remember, that for this thy God will reckon with thee!"

Manasseh staid to hear no more. He had nerved his heart to the deed required of him; he had resolved on the sacrifice,

which the broken laws of God called for, and further representations hurt rather than strengthened. He dared not pause to consider on all that his determination embraced. There was woe—there was agony; but still he was decided; and he speeded to his home, to cast from him all that made that home so dear.

Manasseh reached the threshold of his dwelling. The parting words of the righteous Pedaiah came to his mind; and for the moment he hoped it would be as he had predicted; and he thought that, should he really find Nicazo attired with care and costly vestments—find her bright in her adorned beauty, bringing before him at once her claim upon his heart as the beloved wife, with the additional one of mother to his sons, the blow he had to deal would be more easy—his hand be better nerved to the stroke. Glorious in her matured loveliness, strong in the pride of motherhood, she would seem a thing placed by her perfections above the lowly condi-

tion of the divorced wife. The broken marriage would then sink him into the desolation of the cast-off spouse. Yes, he felt that were it thus, the calls of his God could be better obeyed. Himself the victim, his heart would be free from that piercing knowledge, that he had destroyed one to whom he owed such better things.

But Nicazo desolate and in affliction, already crushed by the misery which hung over her—Nicazo fainting, loving, and despairing—clinging to the hand which discards—appealing to the heart which rejects her! Oh! sin—sin—how hard to retread the steps by which thine hand has led us!

Manasseh entered his home; and the aspect of all—of children, servants—the empty court, all told that the sentence of Nehemiah was made known. He could not speak to those fair boys. Contrary to their constant usage, they came not to his meeting; but in the looks cast towards him

—in the extended arms of the gentle Adaiah, who seemed even then to plead not to be cast from a father's bosom, Manasseh read their feelings. He passed them. One minute's interchange of fond words with those sweet children would have robbed him of the strength so strictly called for.

Manasseh sought Nicazo in the apartment she usually occupied. He found her not; but a servant who had followed his steps, directed him to the chamber where she had passed that long day. Thither he bent his way, slowly, silently. There seemed in his spirit—in his feelings at that moment, a quiet, a deadness, like that strange calm which precedes the storm—that fatal stillness preluding the dread volcano. Still was he firm; and the resolves called for by the reasoning of Pedaiah—by the movements of religion in his soul—were even then all unchanged.

He entered not the chamber at once; but rested in the doorway. He felt that

the quick eye of Nicazo in one glance would read half the dreadful tale he had to tell, ere he had found words in which to couch it. He hoped it would be so. But she saw him not. Resting against the stone arch of an open window, her eyes were turned to the smiling expanse of country which spread so fair below, but no ray of intelligence glanced from beneath those lids—her eyes rested on vacancy. They added to the sad aspect she presented, and corresponded with the rigid, motionless posture she had taken.

Where was the becoming apparel predicted by the sage Pedaiah? Where the gemmed and lustrous tresses, and all the costly adorning then in use among the women of Jerusalem?

A dusky robe hung around her form. It was the mourning garment worn at funereal feasts. He hair fell in disorder over her neck and shoulders; the jewelled fillet which usually confined its dark luxuriance, lay at her feet. Every mazy ringlet

was pressed back from her forehead, as if she sought to meet more freely the cooling influence of the evening breeze, thus leaving her face entirely exposed to view. Who would have recognized the loveliness of the fair daughter of Sanballat, in the swollen features, the grief-stained cheeks, the unclosed mouth which hung almost in helpless idiocy, marking the ravages sorrow had made upon the afflicted Samaritan? She stood so like a statue—pale, breathless; yet at times her bosom heaved slowly beneath the folds of the dark garment which shrouded all the beauties of her form.

Manasseh approached her. Still her eye turned not towards him. He took her hand; its chillness startled him; and he feared for the consequences of the misery heaped upon her. She started slightly at his touch, and a tremor passed over her; but she turned not to him; and in an instant was fixed in all the deathlike rigidity which before marked her appearance.

Stern, however, was the expression of the countenance, where all had been of sorrow; and a prouder erection of the head, now usurped the mild, graceful dignity of her usual bearing.

Still firm in purpose, though the damp drops of agony stood on his brow, Manasseh sought to draw the attention of Nicazo to himself, and softly whispered her name.

"Manasseh!" — she slowly responded, with low and husky voice; but clasped with convulsive tightuess the hand which had taken her own.

Again he repeated—"Nicazo!"

The averted eyes were then turned to him; but with a glance of such piteous inquiry—such heart-broken affection, that Manasseh sobbed aloud, as he met that melting look of sorrow and despair.

At another moment such startling evidence of grief in her husband would have called for the tenderest sympathy from one, who ever wept and smiled as he grieved

or rejoiced. But now there seemed a studied blindness to the passionate ebullition which burst from the breaking heart of the son of Joiada, and she turned from him.

Too well known was the warm, affectionate spirit of Nicazo to the husband of her love, for him an instant to mistake the nature of the feelings which now actuated her. He saw all the heroism of her conduct. In her coldness, he saw the tenderness which sought to lessen the struggle which she must be sensible, shook his being to its centre. In the calm assumed, he saw the sweet consideration which forbore to wring his bosom by the supplications and tears, with which his purpose might have been stayed, if not turned; and in the dignity with which she now stood unmoved by his side, he saw at once the pride and modesty of woman, which cannot sue to be retained in the heart which would seek to banish her, though that banishment were death. Manasseh saw all this, and more;

and felt that the glorious creature by his side, was in that moment of her desolation —all grief-disfigured, cold, stern as she was,—more dear to him than in that moment, when bright in beauty, blushing with the grace of maidenhood, loving with the tenderness of the bride, he first received her from her father's arms. His doom was fixed.

"Nicazo," he whispered softly, as he drew her to his bosom — "we must go!"

"*We!*" she said, for the moment turning to his embrace. "*We!*" she again repeated with mournful cadence; and a throe as of a convulsion passed over her frame; and the sad eyes upturned to heaven, seemed to seek support from thence in this trying hour.

"Yes, Nicazo, *we*. Thou art banished from Jerusalem. They would tear thee from thy husband's bosom,—for his iniquity—his transgression, judgment is come. But guilty—sin-convicted as that bosom is, it

shall at least be true to thee. Where thou goest, I will go."

The proud dignity with which Nicazo had stood to receive her expulsion from him, whom her heart had loved so long, at once forsook her. She gazed for an instant in his face, with an earnest, searching, intense look, that had its spring in the misery that had overwhelmed her. She read her respite in the glance which met her own, and for a minute she hung in mute extacy to the bosom to which she was so warmly pressed; but sinking on the ground from thence, she was now the slave—the lowly though loving one—embracing, with tears of grateful feeling, the knees of the husband whose affection had been so bitterly proved—an affection so firmly paramount over every other tie. But this was not all. With the tender self-sacrificing spirit of the wife, she even pleaded his cause against herself; and brought to his view the fearful extent of the sacrifice he was about to make, —country, dignities, nay even religion, set

aside for her sake. Manasseh felt each word's truth, but remained unchanged. The weakness of human nature, the strength of human passion, were never more fully proved than in that hour.

CHAPTER XV.

THE gates af Jerusalem closed on the son of Joiada. The priest of the temple—the anointed of God, with his wife and his offspring, joined the throng of exiles. On his brow was the swollen vein of agony,—his lip was quivering—his wonted step of vigour was slow, languid, and lingering; but still no word of murmuring was breathed; and the high-born of Zion prepared to take up his abode with the enemy—the sworn foe to the city of his kindred—with Sanballat the Horonite.

It was a strange epoch in the life of a man. Nicazo felt that it was so; and even

when rejoicing beneath his smile—rejoicing that her noble boys still owned a father, felt, with a woman's terror, that some great law had been subverted, for one, born to dignity and honour in his own nation, thus to sink to the lowly condition of the outcast.

Received with joy into a father's home, whose ambition saw in the noble exile, the strict Tirshatha had banished, an instrument for its furtherance; beholding her husband and children treated with affection and jealous kindness, the wife of Manasseh had surely little cause for woe. Still, as time passed on, the fading cheek, the hollow eye, the wasting form, spoke of sickness or disquietude. There were both.

The events of that dreadful day, when the unholy nature of the union of Manasseh with herself first became known to Nicazo, had inflicted a wound, for whose healing time seemed powerless; and shaken to her very centre, health fled the fragile frame, whose strength lay in her heart's happiness.

Of disquietude she had much. Her's was the sad destiny of seeing sin and sorrow stamped on the brow of one beloved. It is a fate that has been known by many—will still be known; and yet the female heart can have no surer blight than the feeling, that, for her sake, aught of duty, virtue, or honour has been sacrificed. For truth, fervour, and devotedness, she can return truth more pure, fervour more enduring, devotedness more self-denying; and glory that from the fulness, the depth of her love, she can over-pay all that is given. But when the calm of conscience—the pride of virtue—the approval of men—the love of kindred—the claims of country—the peace of righteousness—when these, and more than these, have been set aside—trampled on—despised for her sake—then how all-insufficient seems the love with which she would seek to repay such fatal sacrifices! As the fabled bird, whose voice pours forth in a gush of song, until its broken heart at once stays the desperate

effort of its harmony; so is it with woman. Is it for her love to fill that drear vacuum which succeeds, when all the better hopes of life have been resigned for her? She feels that it is inadequate, and her over-tasked heart, frighted, palsied, sinks in atrophy. "Is she ungrateful—forgetful?" She feels the question may well be asked. Again she rouses the dormant energies of her love. It would have made the blessing, the glory, of a virtuous union. It is unequal to heal the wounded spirit—to pluck from the bleeding breast the arrows of remorse. She finds that it is so; she believes that he whose love has led to such fatal sacrifices, feels how insufficient is their recompense—that he already repents them, and curses the wild chimera—the guilty frenzy which deluded. Nicazo experienced all this.

No sigh of complaint heaved the bosom of Manasseh;—no looks of regret were cast towards Jerusalem;—no word of sorrow passed his lips. To her he was the same—

devoted and adoring; and so guarded, so strictly schooled was his aching heart, that the most scrutinising eye might have vainly sought symptoms of that which was within. But the tender wife sees not as others see. She felt—she *knew* with dreadful certainty, that the canker-worm of remorse gnawed at her husband's heart; that regret and misery, quelling all noble aspirations, bent his spirit to the earth. And she, for whom all this wetchedness was endured, could do nothing. Could she assuage the agony so carefully, so sternly hidden from her? Could she speak comfort and peace to the heart, which, as is if greedy of its grief, resented the very suspicion of it! She could not. She loved—she doted; but alas! love was no remedy. Nicazo died.

Manasseh knelt beside the bed of the dying Samaritan; held within his burning palm the small transparent hand, whose last pulse was a pressure of affection; saw the last feeble breath stir the gentle breast, whose dying thought was of him; saw the

icy hand of death spread its ghastly influence over one, on whose existence his every hope was placed; and felt that earth had now no deeper sorrow.

Manasseh passed rapidly from the chamber of the dead, betraying his grief not by the raised cry common to the Jews, but by the deep, choking sobs of a broken-hearted man. The presence of others at this moment became a very agony. At the expiration of a few hours he again came forth. He listened calmly to the words of consolation offered by those around: dried the tears of his weeping boys; and then bent his steps towards that room, where lay all that earth owned of his lost Nicazo.

Sending forth the wailing attendants, Manasseh intimated his intention of keeping the death-watch. He was obeyed; and all left him.

The son of Joiada was now alone in the chamber of death—alone with God—and prepared to read the most awful lesson which the Almighty has ever taught the heart of man.

There lay the idol, for whom every power of his being had united to love—to worship; for whom the laws of God had been forgotten—the duties of life neglected. There lay the exquisite—the highly-gifted Nicazo: a nothing—worse than nothing. Who could have felt, while looking upon such loveliness, so fair a thing could perish?

Manasseh removed the veil thrown over her, and gazed on her face. Even now she looked but slumbering in her beauty; and the saddened heart for one brief moment beat quicker, as the dear, familiar features met his view. But the long tresses of raven black, gathered carefully on each side of the matchless formed head and shoulders—the linen vesture folded on the still bosom—the arms drawn closely down—the pale hands, the slender fingers, whose tips were already tinted with the first faint purple of decay—all spoke of something strange—horrible. The lips of Manasseh were fast compressed, and his clenched

hands shook in agony; every nerve in his frame ached from the terrible nature of the blow he had sustained; but there was something too solemn in that hour for tears: and the outbreak of sorrow which the husband—the lover—the bereaved man would have felt a relief in pouring forth, was all too earthly, too redolent of human feeling for the sacred nature of that moment. God spoke to him then, and his moved spirit lifted itself above the bleeding heart, the crushed feelings, to listen. God speaks to us all at such times. We too must stay the tumult of mortal passion, that our souls may be all given to the lesson.

Manasseh stood by the side of one, on whom sat the curse uttered from the beginning of the world. The curse! yes. The Bible tells us of it, poets sing of it, philosophers reason on it, and man goes forth and meets it in every avenue, whether in the crowded city, or the waste solitudes of this earth, and still he thinks not of it; thinks not, feels not, that God's curse is falling

on all around, the curse uttered on disobedience. We inherit with man's sin that curse.

And who that find themselves alone with the dead, in the suppressed respiration, the soft tread, the whispered word, the serious, dismayed look, does not show the instinctive knowledge of this awful fact? The son, the daughter, may weep by the side of the lifeless parent; and with the tears caused by the bereavement, still may feel consoled that the dear one is removed from suffering, that their days have been happy, their mind prepared, that the end of their career is not untimely, hurried; still there is an appalling second feeling, beyond grief, beyond resignation. It is from the actual presence of death. It is to see all the glorious structure from which thoughts, words, actions, seemed to issue, as though created for perfection and eternity, destroyed. It is to see the stain of mortality on a creature created for immortality. The heart of man trembles within him; God's curse is there. So when the

course of nature is interrupted, and the parent's hand closes the eye of the dying child, religion, which teaches that of such are the kingdom of God, bids the tear of selfish regret be dried. It tells them that their loss is the spotless infant's gain; that heaven is reached ere the pilgrimage through a corrupt and polluted world is well begun; that without sin-stain the beautiful spirit springs at once to bright and holy regions, and gains the glory reaped by a Saviour's death, before it has quailed at guilt, trembled at temptation, or undergone with dismay, "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." Death too, in such as these, loses half its earthly terrors. The lifeless child is scarcely less lovely than the sleeping one. The sunny ringlet plays on the fair forehead; the rounded cheek, the pouting lip, the ivory lid, still speak of life. But the curse is there, and the mind is stricken with its presence, and writhes, and is tortured; and it is with a short, gasping breath, a sense of oppression, that man

looks on the bright existence ceased, gone. But there is good in this anguish.

Manasseh turned from gazing on the fragile flower, whose removal had rendered earth a dreary wilderness, whose perishing spoke of the nothingness of that earth's treasures. His very soul was rived with the sad contemplation, and placing the linen pall gently over the face of the dead, he retreated into a distant corner of the apartment. With his face buried in his hands, as if still more to shut out the touching spectacle, he applied his mind to the most intense meditation. The past, the present, and the future came by turns beneath this mental review. For the past, but brief thoughts were necessary. He at once saw that God's best gifts had only been used to turn his heart from him who gave. He looked to the present, the cold cheerless present, with its acute misery, its sickly pressure of despair, and felt with shame and remorse that all this followed naturally. What had he done for the present? With the blind, sinful

desperation of the gamester, he had staked his all of happiness on one frail chance, and had lost. He had raised an earthly idol for his heart's worship, and decking it with the flowers and gewgaws of life, had lived but for it, shutting out all loftier aspirations and nobler views. He turned to the future. Alas! vainly his eye looked onward into time. All was desert; the irrevocable past, with all its misused powers, even there extended its blighting influence. Nothing bright, nothing happy intervened in the long way before him; and the soul sank with a sense of weight, as the years which were still to be passed, rose hopelessly, joylessly before it. Shrinking from the sterile prospect, overwhelmed, confused, maddened, for a moment his reason shook; and like those hapless barks, which in the deep sea-trough feel one minute's calm before they are either utterly engulphed, or again rise on the gigantic wave, so with the mind of Manasseh. The stupor of overwrought feeling rested on him. But one dark thought

made itself perceptible in the chaos of that moment. It was the wish for death, that guilty, rebellious wish, which shrinks impatiently from the inflictions of the Almighty.

"Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." In the deep misery which bade the heart of Manasseh turn loathing from life, heaven called its own.

How often is it thus! God calls to the children of the world, by happiness, enjoyments, and delight; the call is disregarded.

Again he calls, but it is by sorrows and afflictions! and the truant child lays a bleeding, breaking heart on the altar of its Almighty Father. How far better that the voice of blessing should be early listened to, that man should bring to God "of the firstlings of his flock!"

Many and painful were the struggles which those few hours' meditations brought to the bosom of Manasseh, terrible the woe he underwent. He was aroused by a tumult in the courts below. He knew with a heart-pang that it was the noise of those

come to the burial. He arose, and once more approached the bier—once more drew aside with care and reverence the linen which veiled the dead. Long and intently did he gaze; and with the devouring eagerness which knows that the last, the very last look then is permitted, his eyes rested on the face still so dear, so beautiful.

"The influence of the dead is that of heaven." Manasseh drew the pall lightly over the lifeless Nicazo, and smoothed it with the careful hand of one who feared to wake a sleeper. His hands were clasped convulsively, as if in prayer; and as he turned to depart, one word trembled on his lips—it was "Abba!"

History tells us, that in after years, Sanballat built a temple to God on Mount Gerizim; and, looking to a passage in the book of Deuteronomy,* arrogated for it the sole right of sacrifice.

* See Appendix, note 15.

Josephus, who however makes the marriage of Manasseh with Nicazo take place seventy-eight years later than the period mentioned by Nehemiah, relates that Sanballat made Manasseh High Priest of this temple, "supposing that it was the greatest advantage that might happen to his daughter's children."

Through these means, and the instruction and influence of Manasseh, it may be supposed, arose that favourable change in the religion and opinions of the Samaritans; and so far the ambitious Sanballat had worked well for his country. But from his encouragement, and the example of Manasseh, this evil accrued to Jerusalem, that many among the Israelites, both priests and common people, took Samaritan women for wives, and rather than separate from them, sought the protection of Sanballat. This was liberally given; and to favour the new authority of his son-in-law, these apostates were furnished with money and houses.

We find, furthermore, from Josephus, that "if any were accused in Jerusalem for eating unlawful meats, or for transgressing the sabbath, or for any such like fault, he fled unto the Samaritans, saying that he was accused unjustly."*

By thus allowing refuge for the trespassers of another church, we are inclined to look suspiciously on the policy and motives which led to the erection of the rival temple: and find traces of the enmity and jealousy towards the Jews, which so long actuated the conduct of Sanballat. Be that as it may, Samaria was largely benefited by his government in the improvement of its religious opinions: and when we find, in the time of our Saviour, that the expectations of the Samaritans were the same as the Jews,† though the rancour and abhorrence between them was still existing, we may conceive that the worship instituted by Manasseh was in all respects according to

* Josephus, Ant. book xi. chap. 8.

† St. John iv. 25.

the divine word, and in consonance with that observed in the temple at Jerusalem.

Thus far, then, we are at liberty to imagine that the after-life of Manasseh was passed in well-directed labours, and in the works of the religion, to which, by birth and education, he had been dedicated. But the mind can scarcely divest itself of the idea, that religious compunctions must have brought grief to his soul, at those times, when the fact of his apostacy occurred to him; and that doubts as to the divine sanction of the worship he watched over, must have militated considerably against that peace, which religious observances are so calculated to produce. With this must have been that bitterness of woe, won by his dark sin. And even supposing that he could look to the city of his kindred, without a sad regret that he was for ever banished from its fair and holy precincts; even supposing that he looked to the prosperous positions of his sons with satisfaction, to his own eminence with pleasure, remorse

must still have been there, and with remorse the gloom, the deep, yearning love, the aching void of a bereaved heart.

In these days, when the fearful stipulations of the law are passed away, and, living under a covenant of grace, we learn to worship God in spirit and in truth; unequal to comprehend the infinite wisdom which willed them, we look to the stern prohibitions of the Mosaic dispensation with something of pity for those to whom they were extended. Thus the transgression of Manasseh to us, assuming a milder form, may appear scarcely to have deserved the severity with which it was visited. But we must remember that he trespassed against a direct and specific law of God; which it is not for man to weigh, but to obey. As well might we question or transgress the divine commandments, which have descended even to us.

Those who have accompanied me thus far in the story of Manasseh, may gain wisdom by his example Let them ever

remember that God looks to us for love, which worketh by obedience; and should the evil hour ever come, when they may be tempted to trespass against His laws, let them not doubt the wisdom which framed them. Let them rather pray that "God will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape."

APPENDIX.

NOTE 1—*Page* 6.

FIRST, in the instance of Cyrus, who, as was foretold by the prophecy of Isaiah, *two centuries before*, fulfilled the inspired word in laying the foundation of the second temple at Jerusalem—a work to which he was called by name.

"Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone: that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; that frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt

be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: *that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure:* even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid."—Isaiah xliv. 24—28.

On looking at the further words of the prediction, brought to the attention of Cyrus, no doubt, by some one of the captive Jews, scattered within his dominions, after the Babylonian conquest, (Josephus surmises by the prophet Daniel,) can we wonder at the monarch feeling himself so clearly pointed out, as the predestined instrument of Israel's God on this occasion?

"Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right-hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him: and I will loose the loins of kings to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayst know that I, the Lord, *which call thee by thy name*, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not

known me. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me; I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. *I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil:* I the Lord do all these things." —Isaiah xlv. 1—7.

Cyrus is here spoken of as one anointed and predestined to the subjugation of nations. History tells us of fifteen conquered by his arms. The prophecy— "I will break in pieces the gates of brass," was strictly fulfilled in the taking of Babylon, in which city Herodotus mentions, there were one hundred gates in the walls, all of brass. The words, "I will give thee the treasures of darkness," may be referred to the conquest of Cyrus over Crœsus the Lydian king, proverbially the richest monarch of his age. And lastly, and as it were to meet and combat the prejudices of the disciple of the magi, the very foundations of their religion were shattered. The Almighty, by the mouth of his prophet, proclaiming his prescience and omnipotence by the fulfilled predictions, shows for whose sake the manifestation was made; and the inspired words declaring the supremacy of the Lord over the false gods of the heathen, goes on with this remarkable sentence; "I form the

light and create darkness; *I make peace and create evil:* I the Lord do all these things."

A volume could not have more expressively attacked the magian superstitions and idolatries. The light, in its different forms, objects which they ignorantly worshipped, is here pronounced the creation of his hands; and the pretended powers of Ormuzd and Arimanes, the ruling genii in the Persian creed, are at once set aside by the mighty God who proclaims himself alone the source of good, and of the afflictions of this world. The potency of the prophecy was shown by the result. Cyrus commanded the rebuilding of the temple, and thus glorified the God of Israel. Darius Hystaspes, though uncalled by the divine oracles to the work, showed no less reverence for the holy undertaking; and through his favour and encouragement the Jews finally completed it. Of the consideration of Artaxerxes for the temple of the one true God, the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah afford ample proof; and even if we look on the favour shown by the Persian king to the people of God, as proceeding from the influence of the Jewish maiden he had raised to his throne, rather than from the operation of heavenly grace upon his spirit, still we must recognize him as a chosen instrument in the hand of God. Alexander the Great, also the subject of prophecy, (see Daniel viii. 20,) two centuries after the edict of Cyrus, though proceeding to Jerusalem

with hostile intentions, by a holy vision was moved in favour of the oppressed Jews; and extended to them protection and encouragement, after having done homage to the God of the elect people, by offering sacrifice in his holy temple.—(Vide Josephus' Antiquities, &c. &c. book xi. chap. 8.)

NOTE 2—*Page* 11.

" And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; and that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away. Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month, and the twentieth day of the month; and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain. And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. Now, therefore, make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure;

and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives. Then all the congregation answered, and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do."—Ezra x. 7—13.

NOTE 3—*Page* 15.

" It cannot now be ascertained, whether Ezra's copy of the Scriptures was destroyed by Antiochus Epiphanes when he pillaged the temple; nor is it material, since we know that Judas Maccabæus repaired the temple, and replaced everything requisite for the performance of divine worship, which included a correct, if not Ezra's own, copy of the Scriptures. This copy, whether Ezra's or not, remained in the temple, till Jerusalem was taken by Titus; and it was then carried in triumph to Rome, and laid with the purple veil in the royal palace of Vespasian." — *Elements of Christian Theology*, by Tomline.

NOTE 4—*Page* 33.

" Wherefore they spake to the King of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions

among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land. Then the King of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land. Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria, came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the Lord."—2 Kings xvii. 26.

NOTE 5—*Page* 34.

Taking the copy of the Old Testament as we now hold it, as compiled by the inspired Ezra at the period of the feud now narrated, we cannot but read with interest that part of the book of Kings which, with reference to the people of whom we write, thus speaks, "Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the Lord, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the Lord commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel," &c. &c.—2 Kings xvii. 34. The learned Greswell also corroborates the extreme of hatred of the Jews and Samaritans, with its protracted dura-

tion, in a note appended to the parable of the Good Samaritan.

"The intensity of rancour and of hatred, which the Jews at large must be conceived to have felt towards the Samaritans, may be conjectured, when even such a person as the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus, in whose writings so many noble and truly evangelical sentiments of humanity occur, could write thus of the Samaritans. "There are two manner of nations which my heart abhorreth, and the third is no nation; they that sit upon the mountain of Samaria, and they that dwell among the Philistines, and that foolish people that dwell in Sichem." —Eccles. i. 25, 26. Among the many causes for this national antipathy, Greswell enumerates also, "the behaviour of the Samaritans to the Jews in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes: John Hyrcanus, the fourth of the Maccabæan princes' reduction of them, and his destruction of the temple on Mount Gerizim; besides divers instances of wanton acts of insult and outrage either against the religion, or against the nation of the Jews, committed by the Samaritans in aftertimes; of which Josephus has preserved the accounts."

That this deep-rooted antipathy and prejudice is inherited by the modern Jews, is known; and a passage occurring incidentally in the journal of the Rev. Joseph Wolff strikingly illustrates it. "Christianity

teaches us," says the amiable and pious writer, "that *even the Samaritan is our neighbour*." How much of these past feelings is expressed by the word "even!"

NOTE 6—*Page* 81.

"Now, therefore, give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever. And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this; should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest not thou be angry with us, till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as it is this day; behold we are before thee in our trespasses; for we cannot stand before thee because of this."—Ezra ix. 12—15.

NOTE 7—*Page* 90.

To those who surmise that the holy writings were lost in the destruction of the temple by the Babylonian conqueror, it must be surely a conclusive denial, that the Holy Scriptures were now forthcoming. And, as a farther proof of their authenticity, it is supposed that Ezra read them in the original Hebrew in which they were written; a language nearly forgotten. For which reason we may suppose the Levites assisted in the reading; translating it after Ezra into the Chaldee dialect, which from their long residence in Babylon, had become the vernacular tongue of the Jews.

NOTE 8—*Page* 92.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of the seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord. On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you, and ye shall offer an

offering made by fire unto the Lord: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein. These are the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice and drink offerings, everything upon this day; beside the sabbaths of the Lord, and beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which ye give unto the Lord. Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days; on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days. And ye shall keep it a feast unto the Lord seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the feasts of the Lord."—Leviticus xxiii. 33—44.

NOTE 9—*Page* 101.

This is not a singular opinion; and it gains weight by the casual mention of it in an able work by Dr. Grant on the Nestorian Christians. Speaking of the rancour existing between parties once united, but driven asunder by circumstances, he says, "It is exemplified in the case of the Jews and Samaritans. *The latter were in part, at least, the descendants of Israel,* and they had as a people been instructed in the religion of the Hebrews."—*The Nestorians, or Lost Tribes,* by A. Grant, M.D., page 200.

Josephus says that the Samaritans called the Jews brethren while in prosperity, and denied the connection when in adversity. This implies that many Israelites were mixed with the nations brought into their land.

See also 2 Chronicles xxx. 6. "Ye children of Israel turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hands of the kings of Assyria."

Greswell says, "The Samaritans, who dwelt in a part of the country which had formerly belonged to the ten tribes; and from the time of their original settlement there, contained more or less of an ad-

mixture even of the blood of the ancient Israelites, were in some sense kinsmen of the Jews, and on different occasions in the history of the two communities, when they found it for their temporal advantage to claim a relationship with them, they were not slow to do so."—*Greswell on the Parables*, vol. iii. page 475.

NOTE 10—*Page* 128.

"So that the generation to come of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the Lord hath laid upon it, and that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath; even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger? Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt."—Deuteronomy xxix. 22—25.

NOTE II.—*Page* 139.

"The particular providence under which we believe the nation of the Jews to have once been placed, and according to which every transgression received, even in the present life, an appropriate recompense of retribution, well-doing was encouraged by immediate reward, evil-doing was resented by immediate punishment, had ceased before that period in their history to which the gospel ministry belongs. During the continuance of this providence, temporal calamity must of necessity have been considered a sign of the divine displeasure, (at least when not expressly declared to be otherwise designed, and differently to be understood, as for the purpose of discipline and probation,) and therefore a judgment upon sin, especially such temporal calamities as, while they involved consequences to the sufferer irremediable in the present life, and so far apparently final and absolute, such as the loss of life, were resolvable into accident, or were the effect of causes over which the sufferer himself had no control."—*Exposition of the Parables*, by Edward Greswell, B.D.

NOTE 12—*Page* 155.

Even in our days, especially with a peculiar division of Christians, there is sometimes seen a tendency to dwell solely on the difficulties of the Epistles, to the neglect of the plain and practical lessons contained in the Gospels. But there is, as Dr. Shuttleworth has observed, "a morbid curiosity in the human mind which loves mysticism for its own sake, and which, glancing thoughtlessly over the most important truths which, perhaps, on account of their extreme importance, are clearly announced, is ever returning again and again over those perplexing speculations for which it imagines that it finds a warrant in some detached and isolated fragment of scripture. This should not be. Taking scripture as the revelation of infinite wisdom, is it for man to exclude any portion of it from his attention?"

NOTE 13—*Page* 157.

"An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever; because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of

Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee. Nevertheless the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam, but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee. Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever."—Deuteronomy xxiii. 3, 6.

NOTE 14—*Page* 173.

Josephus, who mentions the marriage of Manasseh with Nicazo, and that the elders of Jerusalem were sore displeased that one so nearly connected with the High Priest had married a "forrain woman," thus speaks of the circumstance; "For they supposed that that marriage would be a means to animate those who had a mind to prophane marriages, and prove an inducement to others, to communicate in marriage with strangers; remembering them that the cause of their evils and first captivity was because some of them had fallen, and offended by coupling themselves with women of forrain nations. They therefore commanded Manasseh either to forsake his wife, or else never more to approach the altar."—*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book II. Chap. 8.

NOTE 15—*Page* 185.

"And Moses charged the people the same day, saying, These shall stand upon Mount Gerizim to bless the people, when ye are come over Jordan."—Deuteronomy xxvii. 11, 12.

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